Credits and Discredits of 1959

Dance and Dancers

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NADIA NERINA and DAVID BLAIR

of the Royal Ballet in the Second Act of *Le Lac des Cygnes*

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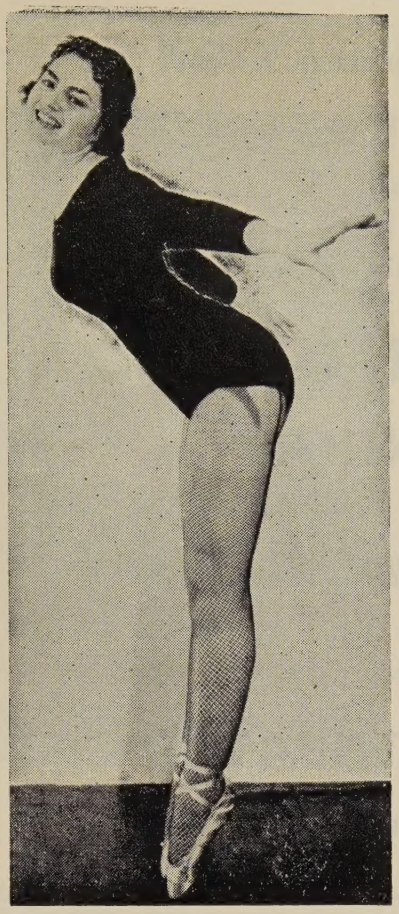

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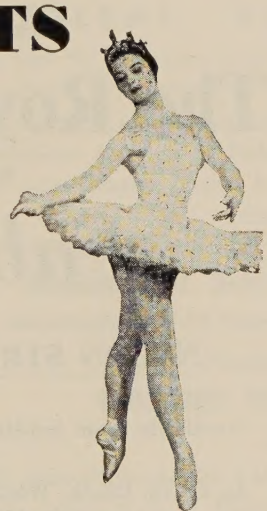

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Dancers of the Year

Photos : Houston Rogers.

LYNN SEYMOUR

ANTOINETTE SIBLEY

WELL, we thought of Beriosova, for she has certainly improved ; we thought of Annette Page, who has this year deservedly achieved ballerina ranking ; we thought of Donald MacLeary, who has become the Royal Ballet's youngest ever principal male dancer ; and we thought of quite a few other people. We also thought of Lynn Seymour and Antoinette Sibley, and the more we thought of *them*, the less certain we became of distinguishing between their achievements. Eventually failing to split the apple, let alone to award it, we resolved to let precedent go hang and to enter their names together as a joint submission for our " Dancers of the Year ".

While we are quite certain that these two are not the finest dancers to grace our stages during 1959, we are equally certain that together they are the most promising.

Seymour, to take the pair *par ordre* — as the French say — *alphabetique*, leapt into our vision one evening in May and instantly fired our imagination. This oval faced, dark-haired Canadian girl dancing for the first time at Covent Garden Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*, was so evidently a ballerina-in-the-making, and she took our breath away. That, as it happened, was all we Cockney ballet critics saw of her during the year, for this was her solitary central London appearance. Apart from this, we have merely been able to gloat over some photographs of her as Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty* that have tantalised our appetites. Yet that one performance was enough, for coupled with a suburban glimpse of her dancing with magnificent bravura in the *Don Quixote pas de deux*, we formed our own impression of this girl with the style and temperament to carry her to the very top.

Always short of starting a revolution, it is difficult to see how Antoinette Sibley could have been given more publicity for her last-minute Covent Garden début as Odette/Odile in October. All publicity is good publicity except bad publicity, and it would be a grave mistake if this one performance were to be considered as notably more important than any of the others she has superbly given during a year of the most remarkable progress. Like Seymour, and for that matter any other aspirant ballerina, the marvellous Sibley is a Friday's child, and both of these 20 year-olds have very far to go. Sibley has shown the most beautiful technique, together with immense charm and vitality.

The two girls provide a most rewarding contrast. If Seymour is possibly the more vibrant personality, then Sibley is perhaps the more musical, if Seymour the more arresting then Sibley is the more fluently brilliant. Lucky Royal Ballet to have — always if they make that final grade — two such youngsters to choose from. Who knows, it may, like us, end up by choosing both.

JANUARY 1960 11th YEAR OF PUBLICATION Vol. 11 No. 1

Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor:* CLIVE BARNES

Assistant Editor : B. C. MASON

WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

THE THIRD SISTER

WHICH of Chekov's Three Sisters was always longing for Moscow? I am never quite sure, but if Britain is not careful there will soon be no doubt regarding which of the Western ballet companies has not booked a passage on the Moscow Express. However delighted we may or may not be at the prospect of the Royal Ballet bearing the White Man's burden in Africa or following the long winding trail across America, a few of us, at least would be even more pleased to hear that our National Ballet had been invited to Russia.

The Paris Opéra Ballet has already appeared at the Bolshoi, and now I am told that American Ballet Theatre are going there later in the year. Yet when the cultural exchange programme between Britain and Russia was discussed in London recently, there was not one single mention of any plans for the Royal Ballet. When I heard that the Old Vic was apparently to appear in Moscow, a tiny tremor of horror ran through me as I contemplated the Waterloo Road Rep. being compared with the Moscow Arts and the Comèdie Française. But in the Royal Ballet we surely have a potential cultural export that might conceivably most successfully wave a few British flags in the vicinity of the Kremlin's onion-domes.

Today diplomacy has become a dirty sneer on the face of civilisation, and the phrase "peaceful competition" still too often implies bigger and better mushroom clouds. But for all this the world at last looks as though it is thawing out — and already both the Russians and the Americans have realised that the 1960 equivalent of "Send a gunboat!" is "Send a ballet company!" When are *we* going to do just that? I notice that in the current Covent Garden report there lies docketed in the accounts £10,400 as a "Reserve for possible exchange visit of the Royal Ballet Company to Moscow". This is an account we would be glad to see opened.

Three years ago when the proposed Royal Ballet visit was cancelled after the Hungarian Revolution, no one could question the wisdom of that decision. Since then it is possible that Covent Garden has approached the Russian authorities, who for inscrutable motives best known to themselves have rejected the offer. Perhaps Covent Garden are waiting for Russia to offer another invitation that has not been forthcoming.

But if we don't want to go to Russia, we jolly well should. In the Royal Ballet we have a national asset we are all proud of and should all want to show to the world, and in Margot Fonteyn we have a national monument on the very pedestal of her achievements. Leave the visit for five years and we might have to wait another ten or even more before we have such a ballerina to startle Muscovey. Right now we have the dancers, we have the ballets, when, oh when, are we going to get those tickets?

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Filming the Royal Ballet

Some of the difficulties which had to be overcome before and during the filming of the Royal Ballet in Le Lac des Cygnes **Act 2,** The Firebird **and** Ondine. **This film,** The Royal Ballet, **has its world première on January 7 at the Columbia Theatre, London.**

BEFORE the next number of *Dance and Dancers* appears, the first full-length film of the Royal Ballet will be shown to the public. The importance of this may be far-reaching because it means that the company, headed by Margot Fonteyn, will be able to play to a world audience and to many millions who would not otherwise get a chance of ever seeing either in the flesh. Possibly the most important feature of the filming is that it means that the art of a great ballerina is preserved for posterity in the most satisfactory way that has been discovered to date. Steps can be preserved by the different forms of notation now in existence, but the artistry of a great dancer dies with her or him and can only be recorded, apart from films, in the fading memory of those that saw them.

A few years ago, Dr. Paul Czinner recorded the Bolshoi visit to London in a film which showed Ulanova as *Giselle* and other members of the company in the *divertissement* programme given at the Davis Theatre, Croydon. His idea was to shoot the ballets straight and as they were seen by the public in the theatre. If there were the inevitable faults, always attendant upon first ventures of this kind, they were far outweighed by the advantages, and the Bolshoi film has been hailed everywhere. Since then, Dr. Czinner has been able to have second thoughts and study the mistakes of this first experiment. After careful consideration and work in perfecting his method, he decided to make a film, possibly a series of films, about the Royal Ballet.

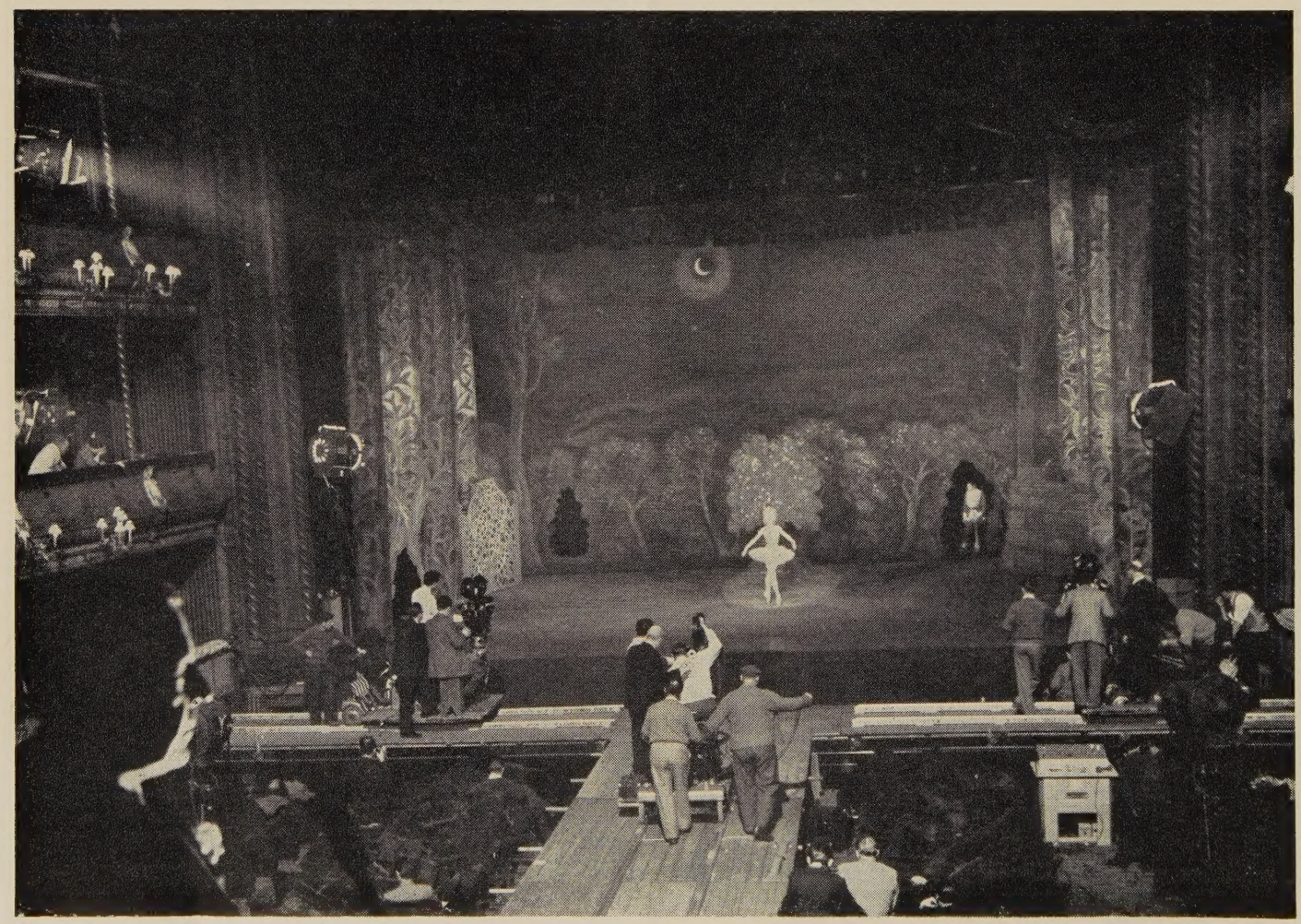
As the film was to be made at Covent Garden this entailed enormous difficulties to be overcome. The usual performances had to go on in the Opera House, so it meant that everything had to be filmed through the night or on Sundays. So on several nights through January, 1959, no sooner had the audience cleared out of the theatre after the evening performance when the work started. For each series of shootings the orchestra pit had to be cleared and transformed into an apron stage, a 65 foot platform had to be built over the stalls for the giant camera, ten other cameras were to be erected in other parts of the house, and by the small hours of the morning Covent Garden became a fully equipped film studio.

Apart from all these obstacles which had to be overcome, it had meant years of planning and conferences with the Covent Garden authorities before the right moment could be found. The greatest obstacle of all was, in fact, Margot Fonteyn, who makes no secret of the fact that she hates filming. For 20 years she has refused offers from leading film companies all over the world because the usual way of making films would be quite impossible for her — about 10 weeks in film studios and the whole performance ruined by the continual stopping and starting that has to go on. It was Dr. Czinner's method of shooting the performance straight that finally won her over. "But even filming at a record rate like this, we only dance in ten-minute takes," said Fonteyn when discussing these problems, "then you have to wait for perhaps about half an hour or do the same piece over again because something went wrong. I'm not trying to persuade you that the mood is broken, or any of that sort of nonsense. I'm a professional and I can snap in and out of the mood when I have to.

"It's not a question of breaking an artistic spell but a purely physical one of muscles. They don't like working in dribs and drabs. They just go to sleep if you don't watch out. So you have to spend your time keeping in trim between shots."

Dr. Czinner, who has handled many of Europe's most temperamental stars, was worried because the physical exhaustion of dancing could have brought out even greater displays of temperament. He dreaded having to ask her for re-takes. But in the end it was Fonteyn who was the greater perfec-

OPERA HOUSE TRANSFORMATION: With the stalls covered by a platform for the cameras, Paul Czinner moves forward with the big camera to shoot a scene from The Firebird *with Margot Fonteyn dancing the title rôle. Frederick Ashton directs the dancers through a microphone in the Grand Tier.* *Photo: Cornel Lucas.*



ASHTON DIRECTS: Frederick Ashton, with Jill Gregory beside him, directs the ballets from the Grand Tier. Photo: Norman Gryspeerdt.

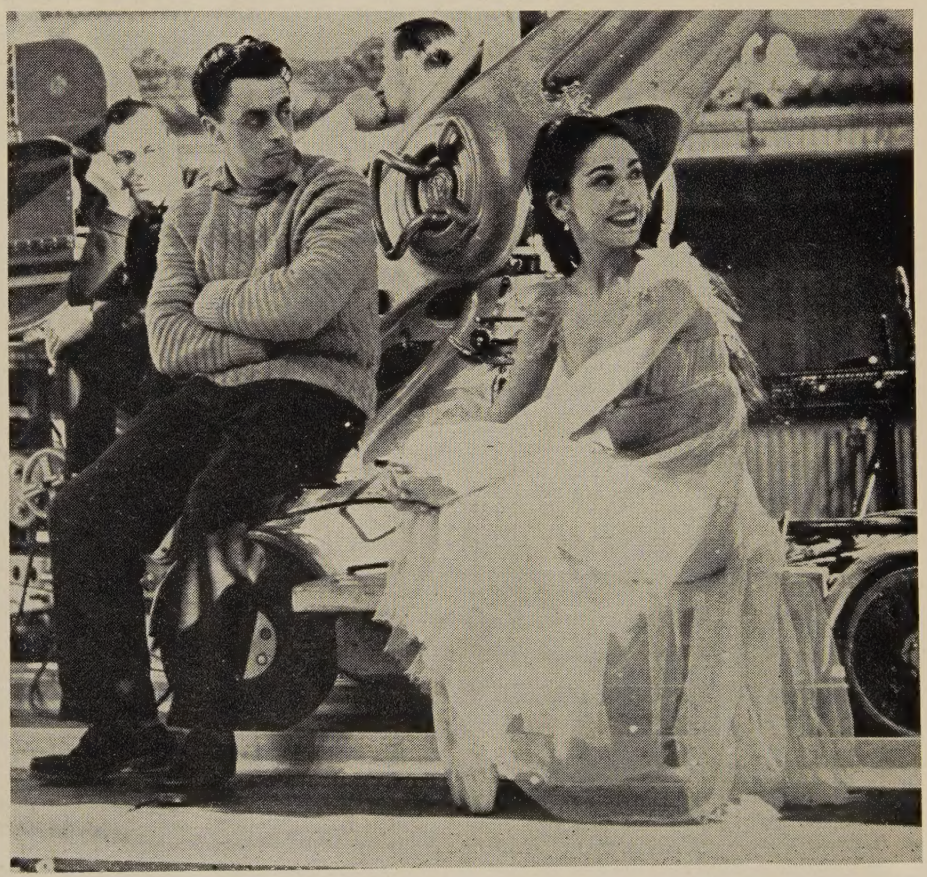
HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION: Paul Czinner discusses a tricky problem with Ashton and Margot Fonteyn. Photo: Houston Rogers.

tionist. If she herself was not happy about any "take" she asked for it to be done again — at one moment she was not satisfied until after five re-takes. "In fact sometimes," said Czinner afterwards, "she asked for a section to be done again though the error was a very minor one — and would not have been noticed. Instead of me having to try and coax her to do something over again, as I thought I'd have to, she was coaxing me to let her."

Not being used to filming, there was another problem which worried Fonteyn. "There's that question of gesture," she went on. "When you dance before a theatre audience, you remember that there are people in the gallery as well as the stalls. You exaggerate certain movements so that everyone can see — as an actor speaks loudly so that everyone can hear. From the auditorium it looks all right. But if you did that gesture into the camera, it could look hideous."

The shooting of the three ballets — part of *Le Lac des Cygnes,* Act 2, the whole of *The Firebird* and *Ondine* — took up the whole of two Sundays and all of one mid-week night, which must constitute some sort of record for what eventually turned into a two-hour film. But the choice of ballets to be filmed was not as simple as it might sound, for Czinner's principal aim was to make a film showing the different sides of Fonteyn's genius. A piece of *Le Lac des Cygnes* seemed to be the obvious choice, as of all the full-length classics it is the one from which excerpts can be taken while causing the least complications — so many parts of *Lac* are complete in themselves. Fokine's *The Firebird* also seemed to be a fairly obvious choice as, from the ballet connoisseur's point of view, it shows a choreographic development upon the classical vocabulary and is also one of Fonteyn's finest rôles. But what to choose for a contemporary work — that was the problem. Czinner was anxious to show the Royal Ballet in something that the wider public did not know by heart. When, a few years ago, Ashton told Czinner that he was planning a new three-act ballet based on a 19th-century classic, that then seemed to be the answer. So the full-length *Ondine,* with only about a quarter of an hour cut from its playing time, became the third work.

Now, Dr. Czinner plans yet another film of the Royal Ballet and also to applying his special method to films of opera, drama and possibly musicals.



RESTING (right): Fonteyn and a cameraman rest on one of the giant cameras in a pause between the shooting of Ondine. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

PARTSA : *Male dancers of the Georgian State Dance Company in their opening number, which had its origins in pagan times and has been preserved in the mountainous parts of the country.*

From the Land of Queen Thamar

The first visit to London of the Georgian State Dancers of the U.S.S.R.

by PETER WILLIAMS

WITHOUT in any way wishing to create any sort of international disgruntlement, I must confess that it has gradually been borne in on me that the world's only excitingly attractive and colourful people hail from mountainous countries — or at least from those countries whose contours consist of something more than mild undulations. But hills and mountains are not quite enough because these people must also have suffered centuries of hardship and continual invasion. All of which toughens and vitalises them so that a man's property and a woman's honour become something which has to be protected and fought for ; when either are ravaged, then revenge is swift, harsh and lawless. All of which seems to me to be eminently right and far closer to the true nature of man than are so many so-called "civilised" customs in most countries.

Apart from anything else this behaviour has provided limitless food for poets, for folklore manifestations and for music and dance. The Georgians, whose republic lies in the Caucasus Mountains on the eastern end of the Black Sea, would seem to have it all — high peaks, deep gorges, immense forests and rushing streams. From the Bronze Age they seem to have been invaded by every country thereabouts, and also by many countries not so thereabouts, with an eye to their rich region with its iron and fertile agricultural land.

It is against this panorama of geographical magnificence and violent history that the Georgian folk dance has developed. Though Christianity did not arrive in Georgia until 337 A.D. it gradually changed the life of its people. However, paganism continued in many of the remote mountain districts and it was this that developed many of the country's songs and dances, and traces can be seen to this day, particularly in some of the round dances which are a survival of fertility rites. Concurrently with this pagan survival ran the development of music and song from the Christian infiltration. These two tributaries combined in the struggle against the onslaught of Islam. Another influence came from the aristocracy, who developed quite another aspect which has had a profound effect on the country's folklore. These aristocratic dances practised in courts and castles brought stateliness and dignity, and many of the women's dances were influenced by the eroticism of the East.

All these influences, over the centuries, moulded a dance form that was indigenous to Georgia, dances which reflected the life of the people, their ceremonials, their military aspect, their games, their humour and their social life.

When I heard that the Georgian State Dance Company was to appear for a season at the Albert Hall, my first reaction was — what ! not *another* folklore company? We have had so many that we have all got into quite a muddle trying to remember which steps and formations belong to which country. But suddenly I remembered Queen Thamar, who reigned in the 12th century and under whose rule Georgia reached its greatest heights. Not only was she a great ruler but she also had an amatory quirk — after one night of presumably fantastic love she had her many lovers put to death and hurled into the raging torrent which flowed past her remote mountain castle. All of which has been the subject of legend and also a very notable dramatic ballet by Fokine. As all these bits of Georgiana started to piece themselves together in my mind, I found myself looking forward to the Georgian advent with considerably more excitement.

Now the gasometer-like building, which good Queen Victoria instigated as part of a memorial to her husband Albert, and whose seated stone effigy regards the whole thing with passive amazement from the opposite side of the road, is hardly the place for creating the proper environment for wild Caucasians. On the other hand it is so completely dotty that really they seemed more at home than they would have in the enclosing frame of the usual proscenium arch or in those mammoth airplane hangers which are what most public halls seem to resemble these days. Anyway, so vivid were these dancers that straight-laced Kensington soon became a very dim background and Georgia (not the one that we so often have "on our minds") won the day — or rather, the night.

Before any consideration of the dances. which followed each other in swift and bewildering succession, I think that something should be said about the general production because this might serve as a model for all future folklore presentations. The background was of plain light blue curtains of immense length, reaching almost to the roof of the Albert Hall. So unobtrusive were they that it was possible for the mind to conjure up either a vast expanse of sky, imaginary mountains or a more urban setting. Wonder upon wonders, the costumes were exceedingly beautiful and designed in great taste, which must have been due to the designer, S. B. Virsaladze. There were none of those cheap and shiny sateens in crude colours that have so often offended the more susceptible of us in many of these folklore displays. What is more, there were no "singing" interludes with choirs ranged across the stage and which so often lower the temperature for those who have come to see dancing. The entire programme was well balanced and amounted to some of the best dance entertainment we have seen for many years — before and since the London appearances of Jerome Robbins' Ballets : U.S.A. All of which must have been due to the company's artistic directors — Nina Ramishvili. a cheery lady who also danced, and Iliko Sukhishvili, a well-dressed gentle-

man who didn't. The music was provided by a handful of musicians — accordionists, strings and percussion — grouped on one side of the stage. Later in the evening some of these musicians entered into the dance — still playing upon their instruments.

In the main there is a sharp division between the men's and the women's dances — the former being fast and exceedingly virile and including a number of feats which literally take the breath away — leaps, spins, dancing on point in un-blocked soft leather boots, leaps from the knee back on to the knee and so on. The women's dances are mainly feminine and consist of smooth gliding steps with beautiful use of the arms and hands. More recently, however, there has been a distinct change in dances on the distaff side as women have taken a greater part in the life and work of the country — even to going into battle. The result has been dances of greater energy which reflect this new-found emancipation. What both male and female dancers have in common is a rigidity of the trunk — the legs and arms providing all the expression. Another common characteristic is the great aristocratic bearing of all the dancers.

The programme opened with a round dance, *Partsa,* from the mountain districts and obviously having origin in pagan times. A running dance with the males in tight-fitting black, banded with gold, and giving the wearers almost a skeletal appearance. Finally the dancers form into two circles surrounding a pyramid formed of dancers held aloft. With the *Kartuli* that followed came a pair dance typical of Georgia. Unlike so many similar dances in other countries, the woman does not go out of her way to attract the male. There is a beguiling remoteness in all her movements as though she was aware of her own attraction, and this is respected by the male, who is not even allowed to let the hem of his coat touch the girl during the dance. In a way this suppression of outward feeling is even more sensual than all those coy glances and teasing movements that denote courting in most folklore, and seemed to place the women almost on a pedestal like some deity. This respect for women was noticeable throughout the dances we saw, even in a more lively number, *Dzheirani,* in which a woman appears to eight men returning home. She appears to them graceful as the antelope (from which the dance takes its name), flirts with them but chooses none. Her turns and the sharp staccato arm movements have a certain similarity to the *Kathak* dances of North India. Dressed in emerald green with gold trousers, her dance becomes faster and faster as the men encourage her, eventually producing large cherry coloured silk squares over which she passes. The effect is charming. But the respect for women was more clearly shown in the Ossetian Wedding scene which came almost at the end of the programme. The lines of girls, clothed from head to toe in white accompanied by the men in full-skirted Circassian coats and long full sleeves and in fur caps, move with grace and pride that has a certain similarity to the stately Polonaise and is touching in its apparent simplicity.

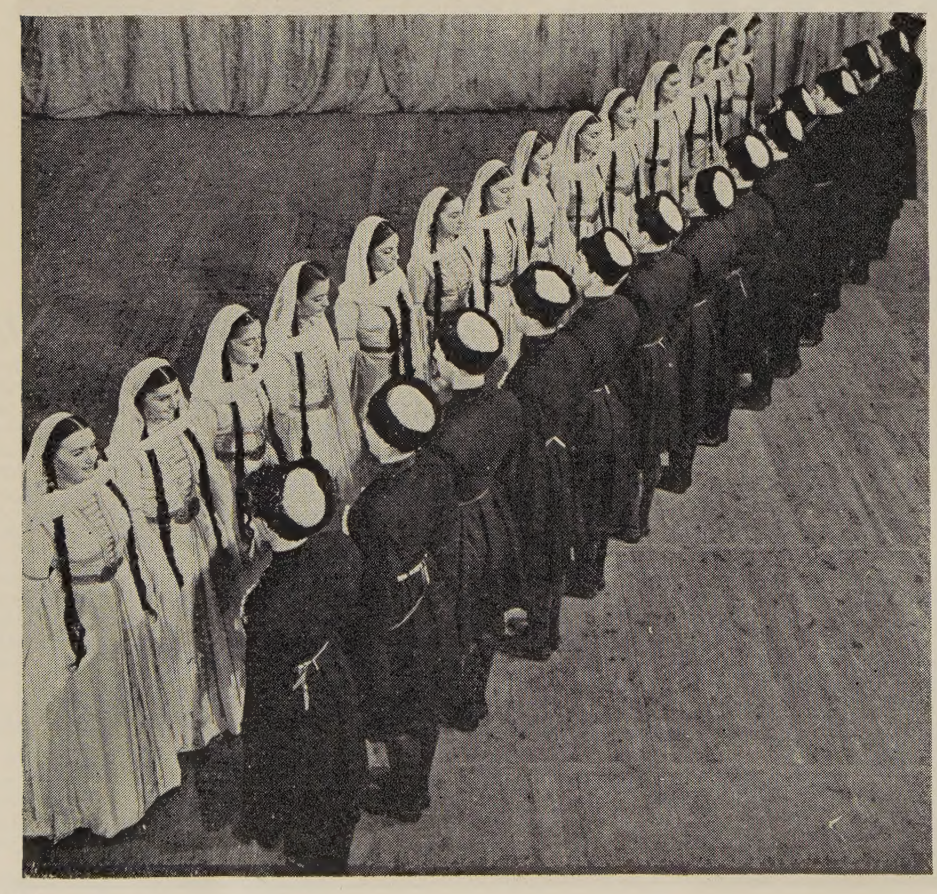
In other dances when the men have been jumping and twirling with tremendous energy, a line of girls will appear and glide and weave their course through the lines of male dancers. This was obviously the source from which Fokine drew his inspiration for moments in his *Prince Igor* dances, specially when the captive slave girls with slow undulating movements languorously file in between the heated Polovtsian warriors.

We have already seen quite a lot of these gliding ladies from the U.S.S.R., but none has held such conviction as these from Georgia, mainly, I should imagine, because this form of dance progression is indigenous to the region. In two respects the Georgian ladies are superior; firstly they were all exceedingly beautiful and secondly their hand and arm movements, the turn of the wrist and the positioning of the hand and fingers were exquisite and always formed a perfect composition with the rest of the body. This was especially apparent in *Samaya,* a dance for three women. Their

KHEVSURS: *Georgian mountaineers in a duelling dance typical of their region. These dances involved much sabre play integrated into the dance movements.*

GEORGIANS IN ACTION : Above left, two dancers in Khevsur Suite *in the middle of a duel. Above right, one of the leaders of the company dancing on point. In soft leather boots, devoid of any blocking, these dancers can turn and jump into the air in a succession of leaps returning all the time to the full point. This is a particular characteristic of male Georgian dancing.*

SIMD *(below) : An Ossetian wedding dance which was remarkable for its great dignity and the proud carriage of both male and female participants.*



arms entwined and held aloft, like a Carpeaux sculptured group, they slowly revolve, move away from each other and then finally come together again. Locked in this dance seemed to be some private women's secret rather like the three ladies in Fokine's *Carnaval.* We know, of course, that Fokine made a deep study of Georgian dance for *Thamar,* but it would be interesting to know how much the dances of this region influenced his other works.

In complete contrast was everything done by the males, even to the fact that many of them went up on to full point, which the women never did. The majority of male numbers were concerned with fighting, such as *Khorumi,* which came down from the days of foreign invasion — by the Turks, Persians and so on ; or horsemanship, as in *Mkhedruli,* where the dancers imitate riders cutting down their enemies with sabres. Of this group, the *Khevsur Suite* should be singled out. Two men start a duel for the love of a girl, she calls for help and soon the stage is filled with duelling pairs — sabres clash at shields and sparks sizzle out in the dark. Eventually the girl throws her head-dress into the midst of this milling throng and tradition dictates that fighting shall cease. The timing was miraculous, as the dance involved the usual leaps and twirls with a bared sabre which, for safety's sake had to land on the small shield of the opponent. Any moment I expected to see portions of somebody's anatomy flying through the air, but as far as I know there were no accidents — not during the London season anyway. The costumes in this number were extremely attractive, being in dull reds, browns and purples studded in bronze.

Another group of dances reflected life and work in old Tbilisi (Tiflis). The first of these was arranged by Georgia's most famous dancer and choreographer — Vakhtang Chabukiani — and his *Khabarda* (an old Tbilisi street-cry meaning "Make way") concerned two gossipy ladies and their servants. The contrast between the heavy roguish movements of the servants

(continued on page 22)

Credits and Discredits of 1959

NEW YEARS HONOURS TO : Michael Somes for being the first British male dancer to be awarded the C.B.E. ; Margot Fonteyn for organising and dancing in the Gala Matinée for the R.A.D., which was generally considered to be one of the most successful of its kind since the war ; Cyril Beaumont for his long service as ballet critic on the *Sunday Times*, from which he retired last September, and for his service to ballet over a great number of years ; John Lanchbery for having raised the musical standards of the Royal Ballet both in the provinces and at Covent Garden ; Paul Czinner for having made a film about the Royal Ballet that is even better than his previous film about the Bolshoi Ballet and for proving that at last somebody in the film world is getting to grips with the complications of filming ballet ; the Royal Ballet School and Peggy Van Praagh for a delightful student performance of *Coppélia* which everybody enjoyed — even the critics ; Jerome Robbins for his Ballets : U.S.A., which proved to be one of the most successful companies to visit England since the war ; the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds for having made it possible for Jerome Robbins to form his company ; the committee of the Baalbek Festival for using the magnificent ruins of the Lebanon as a setting for some of the world's greatest artists ; Marie Rambert for her great personal success when her company paid its first visit to the United States ; Festival Ballet for its successful tours of Europe and for being the first British company to visit South America ; Western Theatre Ballet for keeping going and for its visit to Brussels ; the Royal Ballet Group (Doreen Wells, Christine Beckley, Graham Usher and Petrus Bosman) for their successful tour in Kenya.

NO HONOUR TO : Ludmilla Tcherina who, when her Theatre Ballet company failed to attract the public, launched an attack on the British public and British ballet in general in the press ; the Edinburgh Festival Committee for still refusing to do anything about improving the conditions under which all visiting ballet companies have to play during the Edinburgh Festival ; those critics who, in their articles for the apparent enlightenment of the reading public, still don't know the rudiments of the classical vocabulary of ballet and its history ; all companies who when they get an adverse press for something that was bad immediately set up a howl that the critics are trying to destroy ballet ; those Artistic Directors in the world who still don't know enough about *all* the elements which go to make ballet so that they fail to direct their respective companies — artistically.

PUBLICITY OF THE YEAR : The Revolution in Panama in which Margot Fonteyn and her husband, Dr. Arias, were involved and which brought her the greatest publicity ever accorded to any ballerina in ballet history, which incidentally also affected the Royal Ballet ; the production of Noël Coward's first ballet, *London Morning*, for London's Festival Ballet ; Antoinette Sibley's first Covent Garden appearance in the Odette/Odile rôle in *Le Lac des Cygnes* when at the last moment she replaced Nadia Nerina, who was ill.

PRESS STATEMENTS WE ARE SICK OF : "I owe it all to mother." So obvious, because without mother, one wonders where on earth would anybody be?

PROMOTIONS OF THE YEAR : John Gilpin to Assistant Director of London's Festival Ballet ; Annette Page to ballerina status in the Royal Ballet ; Donald MacLeary from Touring Royal Ballet soloist to a principal dancer in the Covent Garden company.

REVIVALS WE WERE GLAD TO SEE : Andrée Howard's *La Fête Etrange*, Kenneth MacMillan's *Danses Concertantes* and John Cranko's *Harlequin in April* for the Royal Ballet ; Frank Staff's *Czernyana* for Ballet Rambert.

CREATIONS WE WELCOMED : Frederick Ashton's *La Valse* and John Cranko's *Antigone* for the Royal Ballet ; Norman Morrice's *Hazaña* for Ballet Rambert.

CREATIONS AT HALF-COCK : Howard's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* for the Royal Ballet ; Jack Carter and Noël Coward's *London Morning* and Harald Lander's *Vita Eterna* for London's Festival Ballet.

SORRY YOU WENT : Anne Heaton, Rowena Jackson, Philip Chatfield, Patricia Cox, Leslie White, Miro Zolan.

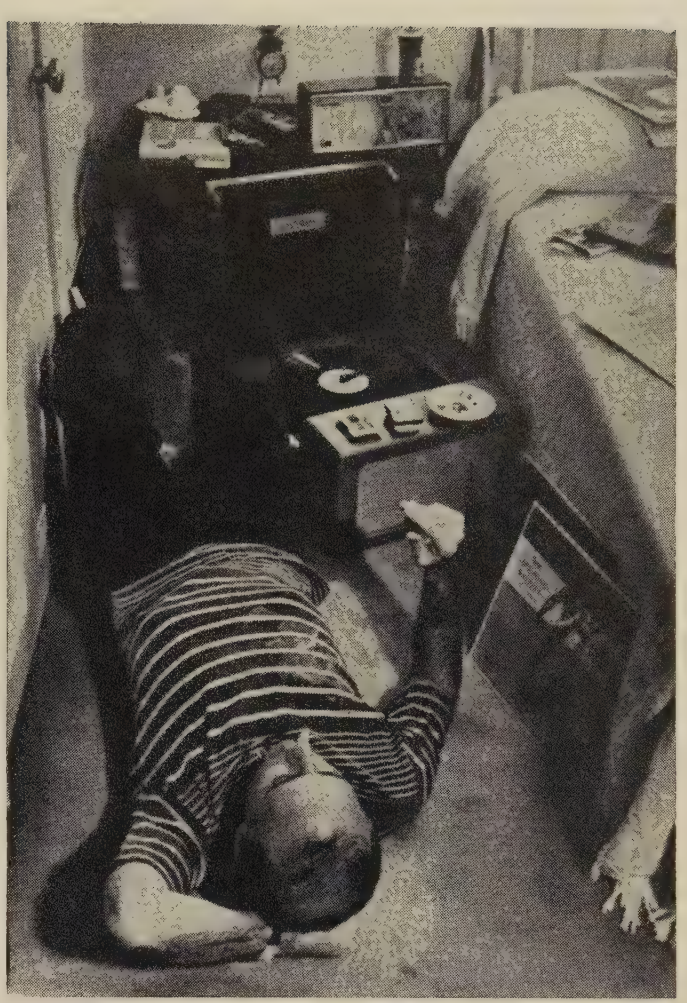
GLAD TO SEE YOU BACK : Toni Lander, back with Festival Ballet ; Carmen Amaya, Pilar Lopez, Yvette Chauviré.

SORRY YOU DIDN'T COME : New York City Ballet, Maurice Béjart's Company, the Stanislavsky Ballet from Moscow, the Kirov Ballet from Leningrad.

SORRY YOU CAME : Ludmilla Tcherina's Ballet Theatre.

GLAD YOU CAME : Jerome Robbin's Ballet : U.S.A.; The Georgian State Dancers.

PERFORMANCES OF THE YEAR : Fonteyn in *Symphonic Variations* and *Ondine* ; Antoinette Sibley and Lynn Seymour in *Le Lac des Cygnes* and Nadia Nerina and David Blair in the same ballet ; Roland Petit in *Cyrano de Bergerac* ; Carla Fracci and John Gilpin in *Giselle* ; Lucette Aldous in *Coppélia* ; Beriosova and Somes in *Rinaldo and Armida* ; Gillian Martlew in *Hazaña* ; Maryon Lane in *Danses Concertantes* ; Merle Park and Brian Shaw in *Don Quixote* ; Alexander Grant in *Cinderella* ; Pirmin Trecu in *La Fête Etrange* ; Stanley Holden in *Harlequin in April* ; entire cast of *Les Rendezvous* ; all of Ballet : U.S.A. ; Babilée in *Balance à Trois.*



MAN OF THE YEAR : Jerome Robbins, whose Ballets : U.S.A. and whose production of West Side Story *made the most exciting dance events of 1959. The photograph shows him presumably working on a new ballet or production.*

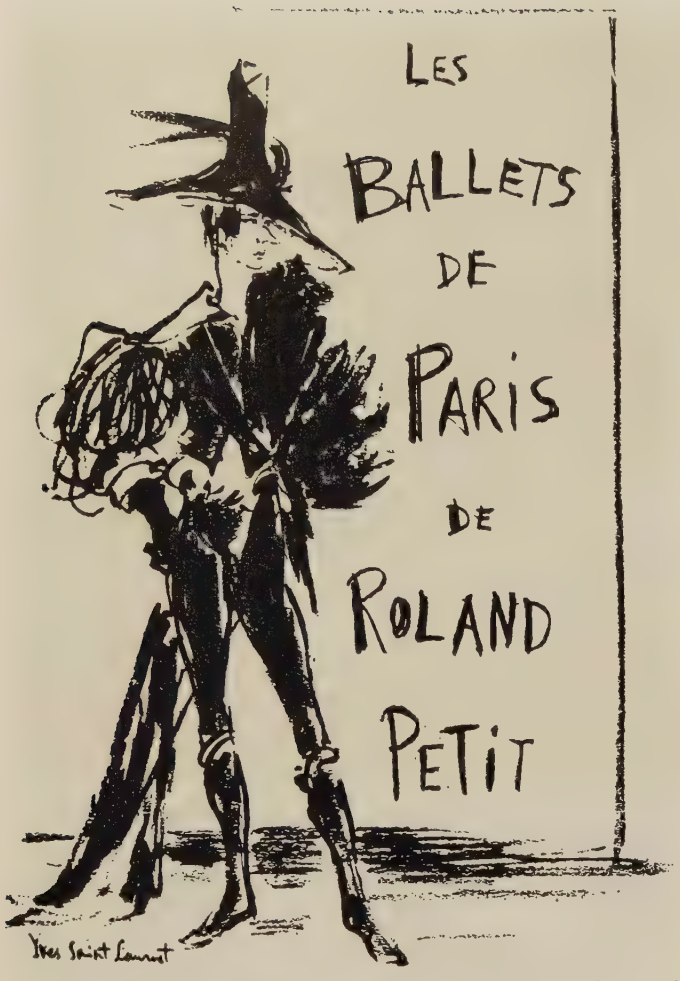
THE MOST IMPROVED DANCERS OF THE YEAR : In the Royal Ballet : Annette Page, Merle Park, Georgina Parkinson, Antoinette Sibley, Christine Beckley, Doreen Wells, Lynn Seymour, Susan Alexander, Elizabeth Anderton, Donald MacLeary, Ronald Hynd, Desmond Doyle, Donald Britton, Graham Usher, Keith Rosson, Bryan Lawrence, Richard Farley, Robert Mead, Lambert Cox. In Ballet Rambert : Lucette Aldous, Keith Bannerman, June Sandbrook. In London's Festival Ballet : Louis Godfrey, Deirdre O'Conaire.

DESIGNERS WE WERE GLAD TO SEE : Andrée Levasseur for *La Valse* ; Ralph Koltai for *Hazaña* ; Carl Toms for *La Reja* ; Jean Rosenthal for her setting and lighting in *The Afternoon of a Faun* ; Ben Shahn for *N.Y. Export, Opus Jazz* ; Saul Steinberg for *The Concert* ; Alix Stone for *Sweeney Todd* ; Yves Saint Laurent and Basarte for *Cyrano de Bergerac.*

DESIGNERS WE WOULD WELCOME BACK : Jean Hugo, Clavé Carzou, Lila de Nobili, Nicholas Georgiadis, Kenneth Rowell.

BOOKS WE WELCOMED : Doris Humphrey's *The Art of Making Dances* ; The new American quarterly publication, *Dance Perspectives.*

MYSTERIES OF THE YEAR : What is the Gautier Club which *Ballet Annual* tells us gave a dinner with Dame Ninette de Valois as guest of honour on January 23? What happened to *Harlequin in April* and *Danses Concertantes*, successfully revived at Covent Garden and since vanished? What happened to Dame Ninette de Valois' promised *Lady of Shalott*?



PROGRAMME COVER designed by Yves Saint Laurent.

Cyrano de Bergerac

First given by Ballets de Paris at the Alhambra Theatre, Paris, on April 17, 1959. First London performance at the Adelphi Theatre on November 18, 1959. Ballet based on Edmond Rostand's play with choreography by Roland Petit. Music by Marius Constant, costumes by Yves Saint Laurent. Settings by Basarte.

Principal characters

Cyrano ..... ROLAND PETIT
Roxane ..... COLETTE MARCHAND
Christian ..... GEORGE REICH
Ragueneau ..... JOSE FERRAN
Lise Ragueneau ..... REGINE BOURY
Captain of the Musketeers ..... LUCIEN MARS
The Pistachio Ice ..... DANIELE JOSSI
Corps de ballet *of Marquises, Courtesans, Pickpockets, Croissants, Musketeers, Cadets, Nuns, etc.*

SCENES: The Theatre; The Gate of Nesle; The Kitchen; The Balcony; The Town Gates; The Camp; The Attack; The Convent Park.

STORY

"AT the Hotel de Bourgogne, Cyrano exposes the real traits of his nature — his quarrelsome and boastful character which urges him to disturb the performances simply because he dislikes one of the actors — the poetical side of his spirit which inspires a ballad even when he is fighting a duel and the romantic side of his love for his cousin Roxane. But Roxane is in love with a young handsome but rather dull cadet, Christian de Neuvillette. Not aware of Cyrano's passion for her, Roxane begs him to protect Christian from the violent practical jokes of his fellow cadets and which she resents. Cyrano accepts and Christian, conscious of lacking the spirit which is so much appreciated by the women of his time, turns to him for advice.

"And so Cyrano gets involved in an adventure which thrills and distresses him at the same time. He writes love letters for his rival, prompts talks with his own beloved and in one scene (hidden in the shadows) he declares love to the young girl on his rival's behalf. Overcome by Cyrano's eloquence, she leans from the balcony to kiss Christian, who quickly takes Cyrano's place.

"But Christian with Cyrano and the Gascogne cadets leave to besiege Arras. On the same day that Roxane arrives to join Christian, he is killed. But it was Cyrano who had written Christian's letters to her during their separation — ardent love letters which impressed the young girl deeply. Shortly before Christian died, he realised that it was Cyrano whom the girl really loved and not himself, and the two friends agreed to tell her the truth and confess the deception. But the death of Christian sealed Cyrano's lips and Roxane retires to a convent.

"For the following fifteen years Cyrano each Saturday visits her to talk to her of her dead lover. One day the enemies of Cyrano mortally wound him. With a supreme effort he goes to see Roxane and reveals his tragic love and his torture.

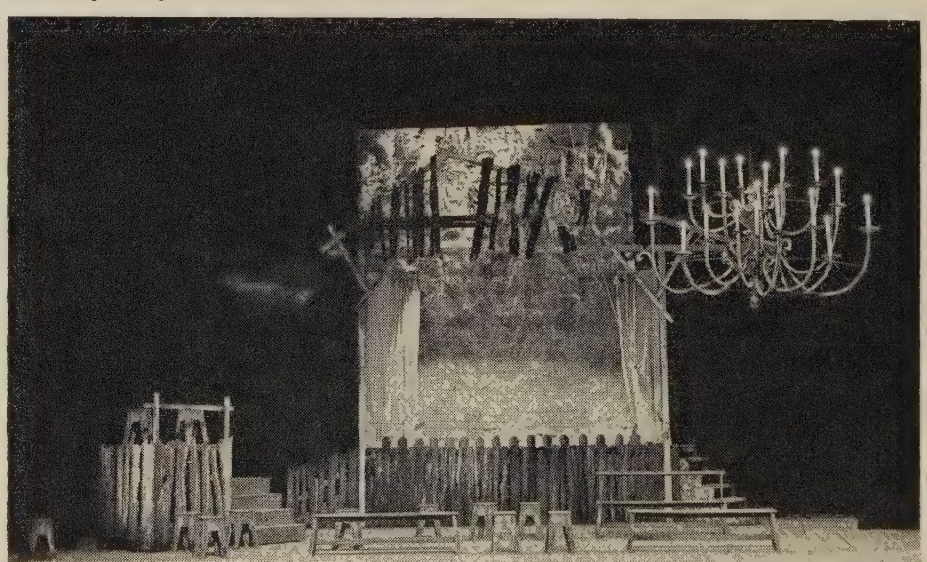
"It is too late, and Cyrano dies, leaving Roxane to mourn her love for the second time."

CHOREOGRAPHY

A MAN jumps in the air, turns round twice and comes down. What does it mean? It depends on the context—dramatic, emotional, spatial or dynamic. It could be the exclamation point of a frenzy, the climax or even the punctuation of a pattern, a colour in the spectrum of a mood, a statement of gymnastic excellence. All that matters is that it is used creatively with purpose, that it has intention in it and thought behind it — that it is not just used as a conventional stop-gap for the vacuous poverty of a choreographer's imagination. And what is true of the *double tours en l'air* is true of the whole range of class-room steps. The academic technique is a gleaming armoury of power and beauty. It can only become tarnished and dirty when it is used without truth and without compulsion. And that, sadly, is the way it is too often used by Roland Petit.

What does it all mean? Particularly what can the classical technique mean when it is applied to the story of Cyrano Savinien Hercule de Bergerac? For all of the "immortality" that is claimed for it on the programmes, Rostand's play *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a bare 62 years old, yet strangely in that brief time it has achieved something of the status of a literary classic. It is a

THEATRE AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE (below): The setting upon which the ballet opens by Basarte.



preposterous, fascinating and unexpectedly endearing play. The story is tear-jerkingly sentimental, and the characters little more than idealised puppets. Even the poetry — Rostand's once celebrated poetry — rings false with hollow rhetoric; in short, the whole thing is a *fin de siècle* fake, to the same degree if not in the same way as, say, Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Yet fake or not, in the theatre the thing, against all likelihood, works; in fact, it more than just works, for in the right circumstances it can be as irrationally moving as one of those sentimental pop songs that carelessly brush aside your mind to tug at your heart.

Yet *Cyrano* poses the most formidable problems to the would-be choreographer. Whether these problems are insurmountable or not, I am uncertain, but unquestionably Petit used the wrong ladder. The play hinges on speech to a remarkable extent; its whole action depends upon the contrast between an ugly yet superbly articulate man, and a handsome yet supremely inarticulate man. To reduce the fine phrases of the one and the stumbling gaucheries of the other to a common denominator of mime and gesture, is to play a very dangerous choreographic game. For such a translation to be successful the choreographer clearly must produce a most expressive form of dance, and this Petit has failed to do. Time and again during the course of the ballet Petit has relied on the out-moded "Lifar" formula of employing classical *enchaînements* without rhyme or reason.

Petit is sometimes incorrectly spoken of as an *avant garde* choreographer, yet he is surely better thought of as an *avant garde* director and producer, for his actual choreography is all too often staggeringly conventional. With a few exceptions Petit's ballets have nearly always been made up of a choreographic mixture of heavily dramatic gesture, of the stylised naturalistic school, and more or less arbitrarily thrown together classical dances. (Petit has, however, considerably extended the range of the *pas de deux*, developing a clutch-and-crutch style which has been worked up into a cliché by both himself and his many followers. Surprisingly *Cyrano de Bergerac* does not provide the opportunity for a *pas de deux*.)

The limitations of Petit's choreography have never before been so mercilessly exposed as by his failure to rise to Rostand's challenge. Roxane's solos are puerile little variations that would hardly raise an eyebrow at a school display, and as for Cyrano himself, Petit conceives this gallant Gascon as even dying with his *double-tours* clean.

DUEL IN THE THEATRE: Cyrano (Petit) disturbs a theatrical performance and fights with a Marquis (Lucien Mars). A moment towards the beginning of the ballet.
Photo: Bernand.

Possibly the choreography's most disappointing moment comes with the previously much-vaunted *pas de trois* in the Balcony Scene, where Cyrano woos by proxy his beloved Roxane on behalf of the beautiful mutton-headed Christian. Accounts of the ballet coming from Paris had suggested that this was a dance of Tudor-like subtlety, but in the event it turned out to be only a painfully ordinary *pas de trois*, with the efforts of Petit to suggest Cyrano's eloquence by having him tap his open mouth significantly, almost as if he were stifling a yawn — proving merely embarrassing.

It is interesting that Petit's choreography is at its best in a well-planned and virile "Dance of the Musketeers", for in this his heavy-handed approach does not matter, and his chosen idiom is suitable to the subject. This carefully planned large-scale male *ensemble* is typical of the Lifar school at its best, and Petit makes adroit use of simple gestures reminiscent of horse-riding and sword-play to add colour to the dance, which has a well-constructed cumulative climax, ending with the dancers kneeling down and shouting out with martial fervour while they salute with their swords.

Petit has played fairly fair with his source, although he has had to simplify the story line somewhat, and has trimmed out the important character of De Guiche. His one major addition is in the second scene where he has interpolated a quite incredibly stupid *divertissement* into the luckless Ragueneau's kitchen. What came over Petit at this moment I cannot imagine, for his taste in artistic matters is usually as impeccable as his flair for the theatrical is accurate. Yet for no reason at all he suddenly breaks off his narrative to give his audience a sadly incongruous dance-scena depicting, or rather purporting to depict, the dances of "Croissants, Brioches, a Pistachio Ice, Pheasants, Fruits and Pralines". These "characters" were not especially well characterised — and it was not surprising, for example, that the young lady impersonating the Pistachio Ice secured a number of press mentions that were intended for the girl dancing Lise Ragueneau.

In fact this whole nonsensical sequence carried us back to Petit's music-hall pot-boilers such as *L'Œuf a la Coque* and *Les Belles Damnées*. But these, especially the first, had a certain wit, invention and even elegance. Here in *Cyrano*, Petit just piles grinning banality upon grinning banality, until he reaches a moment of almost petrifying silliness when the young lady who is not

MADAME RAGUENEAU'S KITCHEN: Basarte's third scene in which a divertissement *of gastronomy takes place.*

THE CAMP BEFORE ARRAS: Basarte's setting for the sixth scene in the ballet.

the Pistachio Ice dances a *grand adagio* with four little boys who *are* Pralines.

The production opposed to the choreography (and for a good half of the evening it certainly was opposed to the choreography) seemed much more worthy of the great man of the theatre which we know Petit to be. The opening scene, once it had got over the ghastly moment when a lackey painfully switched on, one by one, the electric candles in a chandelier, had a good sense of atmosphere. There was atmosphere also in some of the battle scenes, and the procession of the wounded from Arras — a frieze of grotesque Callot-like figures — proved exceptionally well done. On the other hand Cyrano's famous sword fight at the Gate of Nesle — which is only related in the play but naturally has to be shown in the ballet — looks a little ridiculous. Even more ridiculous is Petit's second inserted scene showing Cyrano's fatal accident which, while sounding perfectly convincing when discussed in the play, looks ludicrous when it has to be grimly acted out for the purposes of ballet.

Obviously one of Petit's main intentions was to provide an entertaining spectacle, and in considering this aspect of the work I feel it relevant to stress that the stage of the Adelphi Theatre is a good deal smaller than that of the Alhambra in Paris, where the ballet was first produced. In this he appears to have been influenced, at least in part, by contemporary Soviet ballet and the Peking Opera. Unfortunately his choreography is terribly old-fashioned compared with that of the Bolshoi choreographers (Petit, unlike the Russians, is strictly pre-Fokine!), and his use of acrobatics seems small beer after the Chinese.

While Petit received a good deal of help in sustaining this his first full-length ballet from his designers, I cannot imagine that he found much inspiration from the score by Marius Constant, which once again underlined all the difficulties surrounding the commissioning of full-length ballet scores. This music has none of the qualities that we look for in a serious theatre piece.

It was most noteworthy for the quite remarkable poverty and monotony of its melodic invention. Parts of it sounded, in Tom Lehrer's phrase, "quite Rudolf Friml-y," while some of its more impassioned moments were mildly reminiscent of Noël Coward. At its best this music was jolly in a sort of dog-trot fashion, at its worst it was as slushy as a melting pistachio ice! There was really only one thing to be done with a score such as this, and the only pity is that Petit did not do it.

DANCING

THE part of Roxane had been originally created by Zizi Jeanmaire, and was later danced by Tessa Beaumont. Colette Marchand, who in London danced it for the first time, seemed sadly out of her depths. Indeed this admirable dancer has surely never been seen to worse advantage by her loyal London public. The choreography allotted to her looked vague and indeterminate, and throughout she gave the impression of a musical comedy star, which was only emphasised when she turned up at the Battlefield of Arras in brown tights and doublet looking for all the world like a principal boy in a very provincial pantomime. Both her acting and her dancing looked sadly nondescript.

George Reich had the appearance of Christian to the life. His classic blonde good looks coupled with his mildly negative personality to produce just such a glamorous cipher as the part demands. With very little help from the choreographer, he handled the Arras scene with some surprisingly strong acting, and he died with touching gallantry. His actual dancing also seems to have improved since he was last in London, and, all in all, it is difficult to imagine how the part could have been better done.

Apart from Cyrano himself, the only other important rôle was that of Ragueneau, danced by José Ferran. Petit had translated Rostand's "high soaring eagle among pastrycooks" into an idiot boy, and Ferran spun his way through the ballet with his face split by an imbecile grin and looking as though he had been caught on the point of some eternal ecstasy.

Of the large company — nearly 50 strong excluding principals — the men were far better than the girls. Although all of them, apart from that ex-Cuevas stalwart Raoul Celada, newcomer Lucien Mars, and Rino Adipietro, were unknowns, they danced extremely well. Regine Boury proved moderately appealing as Lise Ragueneau, while Gilbert Mougin, Claude Moulin and Robert Farlow were quite nimble as the three acrobats, although none of them was in the Teddy Rodolphe class.

I have left till last the one factor, apart from the décors, that made the ballet worthwhile, the *bonne-bouche*, or rather the *bonnez*, of the evening, Roland Petit's performance as Cyrano. Petit emerged from *Cyrano*

CHRISTIAN IN LOVE: Christian (George Reich) gazes lovingly at Roxane during the performance of a play. *Photo: Mike Davis.*

de Bergerac as a kind of artistic schizoid ; his Dr. Jekyll of a dancer desperately trying to counterbalance the efforts of his Mr. Hyde of a choreographer.

Whatever one can think of the ballet itself, I imagine that there can be only one view of Petit's performance, which was an absolute *tour de force* in the art of buckling swashes. I had long realised Petit was a dramatic dancer to be reckoned with, but I was still not prepared for a portrayal of such power and convincing passion. There is hardly another dancer in the world who could get within a nose-length of him in this. With precious little help from the choreography, by sheer force of personality and acting ability, he projected a full-length portrait of Cyrano. The panache, nobility, and above all the pathos of Rostand's character were perfectly realised. Never once did Petit step outside his period framework, never once did he put a foot or flourish wrong, and this was a performance, unlike the ballet itself, that appeared even better on a second seeing.

It seems a pity that Petit had not settled for a one-act ballet, for with a little judicious cutting of its very plentiful padding, this extenuated two-acter would have proved far more acceptable had it not been forced to bear the full weight of an evening's entertainment. It would have proved even more acceptable still if, before he had embarked on his venture, Petit had asked himself that question : "A man jumps in the air, turns round twice and comes down. What does it mean?" **Clive Barnes.**

THE CONVENT PARK : The final scene by Basarte in which Cyrano dies, and Roxane continues her cloistered life.

DECOR

WHEN we talk about masterly and exciting French ballet design it usually means that in fact we are talking about the designers presented in the theatre by Roland Petit. Hardly a painter-cum-designer, working in France since the war, worth his salt — or rather his paint — has been neglected by Petit. If in recent years there has been a tendency towards clutteration on the stage and an exaggeration amounting to *haut chi-chi*, then that has been more the fault of a decided trend that has swept through most European theatres in a rebellion against the starkness of the war and pre-war stages.

However much we may admire all this there are certain themes that need a more sober, less frivolous approach, and I would say that Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* is one of them. When I heard that Petit was mounting a ballet on this, what the programme calls "immortal" work, my heart sank for its designing. I thought back on that wonderful series of stage pictures that Christian Bérard created for the same "immortal" at the Comedie Française, possibly the most distinguished from any country during the 'thirties, and my heart sank even lower when I heard that one of the great masters of French couture — Yves Saint Laurent (heir to the House of Dior) — was to be responsible for the costumes.

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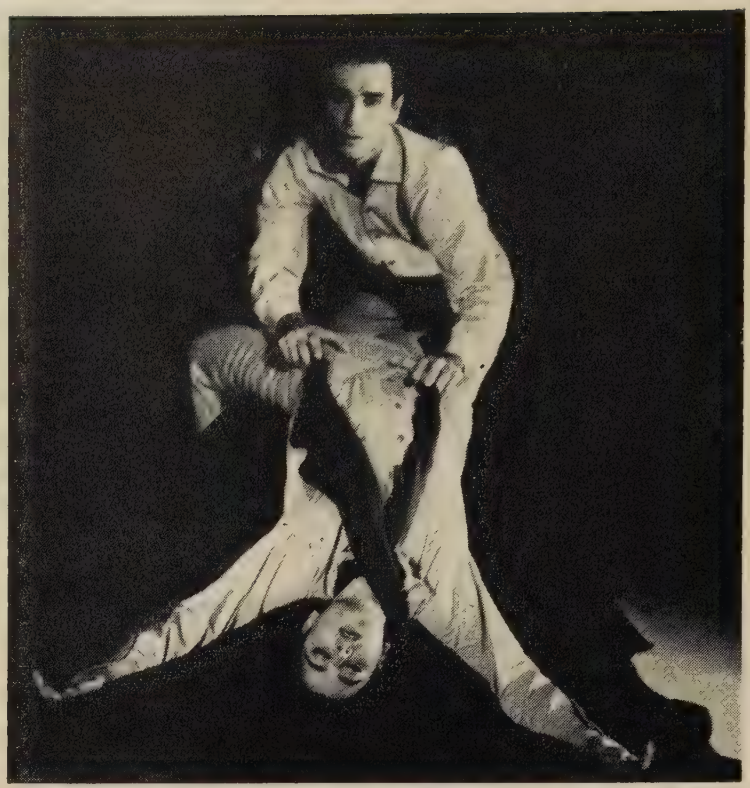
THE DEATH OF CYRANO : Two moments from the last scene. Left, Roxane (Colette Marchand) discovers that it is really Cyrano she always loved. Right, Cyrano (Petit) dies. *Photos : Mike Davis.*



OTHELLO : *Two moments from the "Othello" section of* Such Sweet Thunder *with Pierre Lacotte as Othello and Lena Skerla as Desdemona.* *Photos : Enkelmann.*

BERLIN FESTIVAL 1959 PART 2

Such Sweet Thunder

First given by the Pierre Lacotte Group at the Berlin Festival on October 4, 1959. Jazz Sketches by Duke Ellington based on the plays of William Shakespeare. Produced by Frank Lothar. Choreographed by Pierre Lacotte. Music by Duke Ellington.

Cast

Speakers	MARTIN HELD, MARIA WIMMER
Othello	PIERRE LACOTTE
Desdemona	LENA SKERLA
Lady Macbeth	MARIANNE LUTZ-PASTRE
Romeo	PIERRE LACOTTE
Juliet	LENA SKERLA
Julius Caesar	JAN BORALL
Puck	MARION CITO
Henry V	PIERRE LACOTTE
Katherine	LENA SKERLA
Hamlet	JAN BORALL
Polonius	ROLFE JAHNKE
Cleopatra	MARIANNE LUTZ-PASTRE
Anthony	PIERRE LACOTTE

AT the beginning of the 1959 Berlin Festival there were two Berlin premières of works by Tatiana Gsovsky — *Undine* and *Schwarze Sonne* — both of which were reviewed last month. To end the festival, Pierre Lacotte created a new work, *Such Sweet Thunder,* and Dore Hoyer was responsible for the choreography for the first German performances of Arnold Schoenberg's opera, *Moses and Aaron.* In addition, excitement was added to the festival by a visit from Jerome Robbins' Ballets : U.S.A., and also a most interesting discussion about *Dance and Theatre.*

It was originally the idea of the Berlin producer Frank Lothar to mount a work based on Duke Ellington's suite evoking Shakespeare's plays and which he calls *Such Sweet Thunder* (based on a quotation of Hippolyta from *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* "I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder").

His idea was that two actors should recite the passages which Ellington has transposed into music. This was to be followed by the music and the dancing of these selected passages. The work is divided into eleven scenes following each other without an interval and each lasting about four minutes. The first excerpt of *Such Sweet Thunder* came from *Othello* Act I, scene 3 — it is the sweet and convincing story Othello tells Desdemona. This was followed by the "Sonnet in Search of a Moor". In each Lacotte and Lena Skerla played Othello and Desdemona respectively.

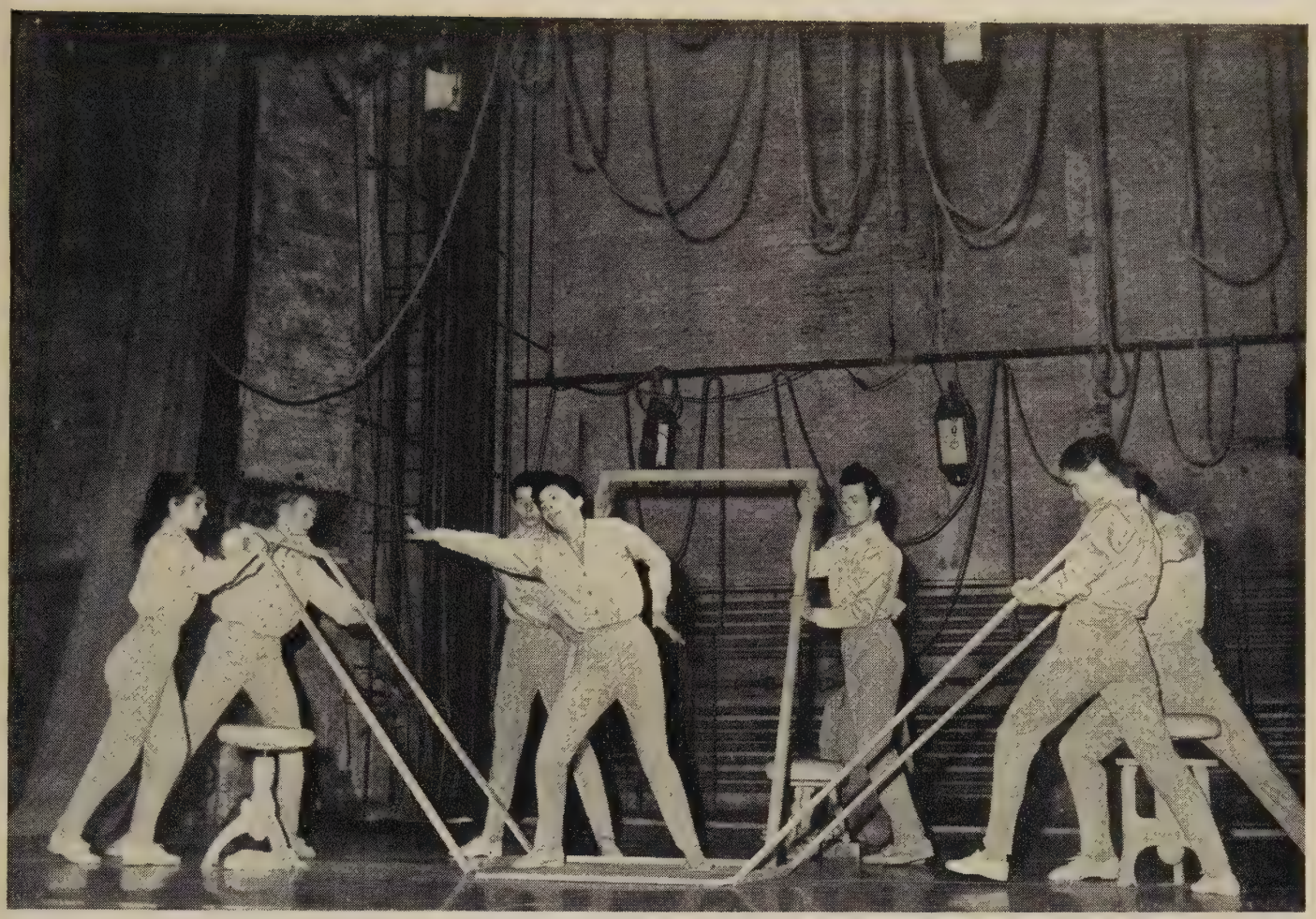
Both scenes were very convincing owing to the unity of the spoken word, the music and the dancing. If in other scenes Lacotte was rather less convincing it may have been mainly due to the fact that Ellington's music is not long enough for any scene to develop in the way that it undoubtedly should in action. This is the disadvantage of using music never originally intended for the dance. Of the rest the undoubted highlights were a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* in which Marion Cito gave a charming performance of Puck ; and "Sonnet for Lady Macbeth", in which Marianne Lutz-Pastré was effective in the name part.

There was no scenery, just an empty stage showing the back wall, lighting equipment and all the usual back-stage paraphernalia. In a like manner, the dancers wore quite neutral practise costumes throughout, making it possible to concentrate completely on the action.

It is for this kind of work that I feel festivals are invented. So that experiments can be made and so that it is possible to see works that it is not possible to see in other theatres. Festivals should be able to afford to take risks and leave the more comfortable security to the repertories of established theatres and companies. Even if these experiments are not always successful, something at least will have been achieved. In this case the experiment was well worthwhile.

This applies also to the Berlin production of Schoenberg's opera *Moses and Aaron* with its controversial "Tanz um das goldene Kalb" (Dance around the Golden Calf). Orgies of this kind are extremely difficult for the choreographer because if they are too realistic then there is the danger of upsetting a great number of people. If on the other hand the whole thing is moderated, as in fact Dore Hoyer did in this production, there are always protestations that the work has been misunderstood. I got the impression that Dore Hoyer, a pupil of Mary Wigman, had rather overstrained himself. It would have been far better if Mary Wigman had undertaken the work herself and for which she would have been ideally suited.

Undoubtedly one of the most exciting



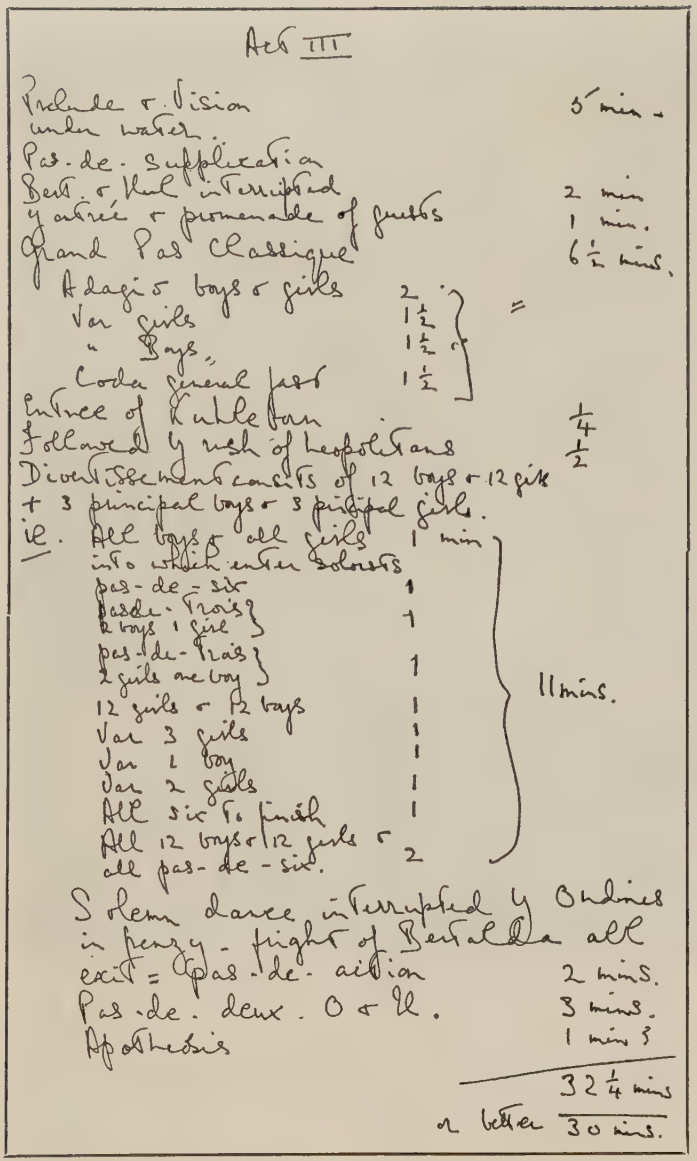
MACBETH *(above): Marianne Lutz-Pastré as Lady Macbeth in the "Macbeth" scene from* Such Sweet Thunder. *The picture shows the bare stage which was used as the setting throughout the whole work. Photo: Lido.*

events of the whole festival was the open discussion on *Dance and Theatre* in which world-famous choreographers — Yvonne Georgi (Hanover), Jerome Robbins (New York), Tatiana Gsovsky (Berlin), Kurt Jooss (Essen), Rosalia Chladez (Vienna) and Mary Wigman (Berlin) — discussed the problems of dance as a supporting element in opera and theatre productions with Wolf Volcker (opera producer), Hans Werner Henze (composer) and Gerd Reinholm and Dore Hoyer (dancers). **Rainer Antoine.**

ROMEO AND JULIET *(below): Lena Skerla and Pierre Lacotte as the star-crossed lovers in another scene from* Such Sweet Thunder. *Picture on the left by Enkelmann, on the right by Lido.*

Ondine (part 2)

by CLIVE BARNES


Act III

Prelude & Vision under water. 5 min.

Pas-de-Supplication

Scene & Ball interrupted

Entrée & promenade of guests 2 min

Grand Pas Classique 1 min.

Adagio 6 boys & girls 2 } 6½ mins.

Var girls 1½ } =

" boys 1½ } 6

Coda general post 1½ }

Entree of Kuhleborn ¼

Followed by rush of Leopoldians ½

Divertissement consists of 12 boys & 12 girls + 3 principal boys & 3 principal girls.

ie. All boys & all girls 1 min

into which enter soloists

pas-de-six 1

pas-de-trois 2 boys 1 girl 1

pas-de-trois 2 girls one boy 1

11 mins.

12 girls & 12 boys 1

Var 3 girls 1

Var 1 boy 1

Var 2 girls 1

All six to finish 1

All 12 boys & 12 girls & all pas-de-six. 2

Solemn dance interrupted by Ondine in frenzy - flight of Bertalda all exit = Pas-de-action 2 mins.

Pas-de-deux. O & H. 3 mins.

Apotheosis 1 min 5

32¼ mins

or better 30 mins.

SCRIPT FOR ONDINE: *Ashton's notes with minutiae for the opening of Act 3. In much the same way did Marius Petipa give Tchaikovsky the details for the length of each dance and section in the ballets they worked upon together.*

THE original impulse to make a ballet on the theme of *Ondine* came to Frederick Ashton in Paris before the war. Having seen a production of Jean Giradoux's play with its fantastic Tchelitchev décors, Ashton was immediately attracted to its theme, and he casually discussed with Tchelitchev the possibility of collaborating together to produce *Ondine* as a one-act ballet. Like so many of the dreams and projects of choreographers, nothing came of the idea. Yet Ashton never quite dismissed the thought of an *Ondine* ballet, but placed it in his mental store-house of possible ballet themes.

It was not until about 1950 that Ashton returned to his idea of *Ondine*, this time thinking of it in terms of the three-act ballet, but once again the project came to nothing, although Ashton continued to mull it over until it slowly emerged from the field of possibility into that of probability. It became a certainty when, some years after his production of *Sylvia*, Ashton was once again searching for a full-length vehicle for his ballerina Margot Fonteyn. In an interview with Peter Brinson, published in *The Sunday Times*, Fonteyn has given her own account of the ballet's origin: "Before Frederick Ashton decided on *Ondine* we discussed several possibilities for a three-act ballet. I objected, a little selfishly, to *The Tempest* because I thought Miranda rather a dull character for me. Then *Macbeth* was considered. I was attracted to the idea in some ways, but for various reasons it was not pursued. Finally, Ashton hit upon *Ondine*. It was ideal from my point of view. That was early in 1956." So *Ondine* it was to be.

Ashton started by re-reading the original novel by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, which, with its Arthur Rackham illustrations, he had known since his childhood. He also studied the scenarios of Jules Perrot's *Ondine* and Paul Taglioni's *Coralia* — the two important 19th century ballets on this theme, discussed in detail last month. He decided to disregard his Romantic predecessors, and to base his libretto directly on the original novel. What was perhaps of even greater significance was his decision to treat the story in a "modern" manner. While he obviously intended to evoke the spirit of 19th-century Romanticism, he turned his back on the possibility of pastiche, resolving to interpret that Romanticism in a completely contemporary idiom. It was with this in mind that he sought his collaborators.

Originally Ashton thought of approaching his friend and former collaborator Sir William Walton to write the music. Although Walton was interested in the idea, he was unwilling to commit himself to the strict schedule such a task would entail, and it was Walton who first suggested to Ashton that the score should be entrusted to the young German composer Hans Werner Henze. Ashton already knew Henze, and had even thought of the possibility of at some time commissioning a score from him. They had first met soon after the war, when the Sadler's Wells Ballet performed in Germany. Henze had seen a performance of the Ashton/Stravinsky *Scènes de Ballet* and been so impressed by both choreography and music, which he had not previously heard, that he wrote an enthusiastic letter to Ashton, which later led to their meeting and subsequent friendship.

Henze accepted the challenge to produce a full-length score eagerly. And in 1956 the choreographer and composer went to Italy together to get down to the preliminary work on the ballet. In *The Sunday Times*, also in an interview with Peter Brinson, Ashton said: "I spent a month with Henze talking with him and with anyone who would listen. Then I wrote the libretto here in London. I gave him a strict minutiae, like Petipa used to give Tchaikovsky, detailing the length of each dance and section."

As this was the first time Ashton had produced a full-length ballet to a commissioned score, he was here working with the same advantages previously enjoyed by contemporary Soviet choreographers, and the collaboration between Ashton and Henze was extremely close. In his recently published book *Undine: Tagebuch eines Balletts*, Henze has described how he came to London in the January of 1957 to work on the score. He would compose during the day, and go round to Ashton in the evening to play the results to him on the piano. As they worked, Ashton's little study in Yeoman's Row would become littered with papers, and Henze says that details of the story were slightly changed fifteen or sixteen times, but gradually the work took shape. It emerges from his book that Henze was greatly concerned with the difficulties of making a full-length ballet score in his modernist idiom acceptable to Covent Garden's mass public, but slowly the score was completed.

Ashton started his rehearsals with the first meeting of Ondine and Palemon, and although these first rehearsals went fairly easily it soon became obvious that it was going to be extremely difficult to work merely with the piano score. He consequently arranged to have the full orchestral score taped, conducted by Robert Irving — then Musical Adviser to the Company — and it was to this tape-recording that the rehearsals proceeded. Ashton completed Act One. and then went on to do the last Act before returning to the middle Act which takes place on the ship. Generally his choreographic method here was to make the dances for the principals first, and sketch in the *corps de ballet* work later; but the second scene of the First Act was, of course, conceived as a whole.

Fonteyn, in the valuable *Sunday Times* interview previously quoted, has said:

"Michael Somes (Palemon), Julia Farron (Berta), and Ashton and I were always arguing about the story-line of *Ondine*. Sometimes, too, Henze's score, which has great atmosphere and is excitingly difficult, just didn't seem to say the same thing as the scenario." After giving a small example of this she continued: "Characters, incidents, dramatic details even grow very much in this way, through discussion with the choreographer and other artists. This is quite apart from the technical development of the steps, the working-out of lifts, attitudes, groups, and so on."

In many ways the problems confronting a designer in achieving a contemporary realisation of Romanticism are even more formidable than those to be encountered by the composer. Here nothing would be simpler than to produce a naturalistic pastiche, as pretty as a picture postcard and yet quite alien to the choreographer's basic conception of viewing the 19th century through 20th century eyes. Perhaps the obvious choice would have been Pavel Tchelitchev, with whom Ashton had first discussed the project more than twenty years previously. But Tchelitchev had died in 1957 in America after a long illness, and had been inactive in ballet since 1942.

Ashton is not quite sure how the Italian designer Lila de Nobili was first suggested to him. He recalls seeing reproductions of her work at various friends' houses and in magazines soon after the war, and he remembers having an instinct that she would be the right designer. When he eventually discussed the idea with her, and saw her work, he became certain. The collaboration between De Nobili, Ashton and Henze was as close as that already existing between the choreographer and composer, and in his book Henze recalls how De Nobili worked on her designs after hearing the music. When these designs came to be realised in the Opera House, she herself did much of the work, personally painting all the big gauzes in sections.

Public interest in Ashton's *Ondine* — a work which by the time of its first performance had been long promised and much postponed — proved immense, and the box office queues, when booking for the first performance opened, exceeded anything seen since the visit of the Bolshoi Ballet two years previously. Before the first night Covent Garden were able to announce that all tickets for the first series of performances had been sold.

The ballet was first given at Covent Garden on October 27, 1958, with a cast including Margot Fonteyn (Ondine), Michael Somes (Palemon), Julia Farron (Berta), Alexander Grant (Tirrenio, Lord of the Mediterranean Sea), and Leslie Edwards (a Hermit). The *Grand Pas Classique* in Act Three was led by Rosemary Lindsay, Annette Page, Ronald Hynd and Desmond Doyle. The *Divertissement* in the same act was led by Maryon Lane and Brian Shaw, with Merle Park, Doreen Wells, Peter Clegg and Pirmin Trecu. The ballet's first few performances were conducted by Henze himself, and the production had lighting by Michael Northen.

Ondine received no less than 25 curtain calls on its first night, including eight with the house lights up. There were fifteen calls at both the second and the third performances, and even today when the ballet is well over a year old, seats are still hard to come by, and the ballet always plays to a sold-out house. When Paul Czinner made his film of Fonteyn and the Royal Ballet which is just about to be released — *Ondine* was quite naturally made the corner-stone of the film.

Yet for all its popularity, the note struck in the press the morning after the first performance was extremely respectful although for the most part just slightly guarded. This contrast between public and press reactions is by no means uncommon with Ashton ballets, but it is perhaps worth noting that the initial critical reaction possibly had its enthusiasm slightly blunted by the unfortunate, if understandable, refusal to allow the daily press to see the dress rehearsal. (It is a formidable task to sum up a full-length ballet on one seeing, and when the critic is in doubt it is not unnatural for discretion to take the better part of valour.)

Ashton has told me that his major problem in his adaptation of the novel was to reduce its story line to a narrative acceptable within the limitations and conventions of the ballet theatre. To do this he has cut the Fouqué original down to its barest essentials, while still retaining its essence and atmosphere. The sub-plot of Berta and her relationship with her humble parents has been completely eliminated, while the relationship between Ondine and Berta has, partly as a consequence, become much simplified. What is left is primarily an emotional triangle, and it could well have been a fault of this scenario that whereas interest is concentrated upon Ondine, the logical central character would have been Palemon, who could then have stood neatly between the two possibly symbolic aspects of his love. However, Ashton's *Ondine* is a work more of poetic form than content, and Ashton uses his narrative merely as a peg upon which to hang his dances. The story is sufficient but slight, and to object that it lacks either dramatic progression or compulsion is somewhat similar to bringing the same charge against a play such as *The Tempest*.

Ashton's characterisation of his principals is, with one exception, as slight and slender as his narrative thread. His method here has been to paint a full-colour portrait of Ondine, and yet leave the rest of the characters shadowy and sketchy in the background. Perhaps to an extent he carried this process too far, and Fonteyn herself (in the previously quoted interview) was expressing, with exceptional clarity, a generally held feeling when she said: "Palemon and Berta should, I think, have been given more opportunity in the score of the last act to clarify their relationship at that time. Their relationship is a vital part of the plot, which, after all, is the old eternal triangle." It was doubtless with this in mind that last year, Ashton removed the *pas de deux* for the two leading *coryphées* as well as the male *ensemble* from the *Grand Pas Classique*, thus providing himself with music to give Palemon and Berta a variation apiece. So far this device has not been entirely satisfactory, but the step has been taken in the right direction.

Yet while it might seem regrettable that Palemon and Berta are little more than ciphers, insufficiently motivated dramatically and possibly sketchily drawn choreographically, this apparent fault has the very real advantage of concentrating the spotlight of attention upon Ondine herself. Ashton couldn't have it both ways, and neither can the audience.

In the actual production, Ashton made one significant change from his original scenario, as printed as a foreword to the published score. It was originally intended for the dancers of the last act *divertissements* to have been ondines in disguise, and, at the crucial moment, they were to have discarded their outer costumes, so providing a rather more vivid climax than exists at present. Apparently this conception was abandoned because of production difficulties at the time of the first performance, but Ashton tells me that it remains his eventual intention to incorporate this missing dramatic fragment.

Choreographically *Ondine* ranks among Ashton's masterpieces. It is not such a complete ballet as *Symphonic Variations, Scènes de Ballet* or *Daphnis and Chloë*, and in some respects it is not so successful a ballet as his other three full-length works. Yet for

ONDINE'S MARRIAGE: The Hermit (Leslie Edwards) marries Palemon (Michael Somes) and Ondine (Margot Fonteyn) in Act I, scene 2. A still from Paul Czinner's film, The Royal Ballet, *for the Rank Organisation. Photo: Houston Rogers.*

real choreographic invention, for the final exploration of the wonderfully symbiotic relationship between Ashton and Fonteyn, for the sheer visual beauty of its choreography, I feel that *Ondine,* with all its glaring inadequacies, remains the equal of any.

Ashton himself claims that the ballet's choreographic structure was based on Petipa. I personally feel that it is far more like, and for that matter far more appropriately like, Bournonville. The First Act, with its Huntsmen's Dance and *pas de deux,* and then the extended choreography of the second scene; the Second Act being given over entirely to pantomime and *pas d'action*; and the Final Act with its Bournonville-style *divertissements* all in coherent style, irresistibly recall the structure of, say, *Napoli.* However, as Ashton has seen very little Bournonville, these correspondences are probably fortuitous.

The choreographic texture is rigidly post-Fokine, a texture Ashton had the first opportunity of employing in a full-length ballet when he produced Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in Denmark. The "aria" and "recitative" represented by Petipa's variations and formal mime have here been replaced by what Andrew Porter has usefully called a "free arioso" — a seamless idiom of dance and naturalistic gesture.

Of his actual choreography Ashton has said, in *The Sunday Times,* that: "In general, all the choreography has been inspired by the sea. I spent hours watching water move and have tried to give the choreography the surge and swell of waves." In conversation, Ashton added that a further source of his inspiration here was found in Leonardo da Vinci's cartoons of water. Certainly, looking at the fluidity and flow of the solo work, and the surging wave-like dynamics here characteristic of the *corps de ballet,* the marine influence is easily enough detected. Throughout the second scene of the First Act, Ashton particularly makes great play with dance images drawn from water. Ondine is frequently given a plastic movement that immediately recalls a rippling mountain stream, while her undulating arms often give an impression as of threading through water, and many of the groupings suggest fountains, waterfalls and cascades.

If this second scene, with its marvellously prolonged *pas de deux* for Ondine and her Palemon, is the choreographic highlight of the whole ballet, elsewhere there are innumerable passages of felicitous invention. Ashton's imaginative version of the *pas de l'ombre* — the idea for which being the only thing he has taken from Perrot's ballet — is a thing of the purest magic. The dramatic *pas de trois* for the three principals on board ship is almost equally effective, as is the coursing pulse given to all of Tirrenio's dances. Quite a lot of the choreography, especially that in the Last Act, is not unexpectedly at a far lower level, and as a spectacle the production is perhaps not quite so enthralling as it could have been, even though in this last respect Ashton has in recent months titivated up the ballet, greatly to its advantage.

Lila de Nobili's stylish and elegant sets seem to carry out precisely the choreographer's intentions for the ballet as a whole. While mistily evoking the picturesqueness of Romanticism, with all its be-turreted castles and horrid torrents, these décors remain curiously and individually modern in their approach. De Nobili's extremely sparing use of colour, which characterises her scenery, is also found in her costumes. Yet these are rather less satisfactory, and her adoption of a predominantly high-bosomed and high-waisted Empire line for the dresses for the women has always struck me as a shade too modish and chic.

Henze's score will, to my mind, always be the ballet's Achilles' Heel. It is undoubtedly a conscientious work, but Henze in his apparent striving to make his own advanced style acceptable to the ballet theatre has produced a hodge-podge of eclecticism. It is difficult without being rewarding, derivative without being tuneful, and seems sadly lacking in both dramatic flow and emotional climax. Characterless and flavourless, the score notably lacks the single-mindedness of approach that is so characteristic of the contribution by the other two collaborators.

Probably almost everyone is agreed that with Ondine, Fonteyn has been given the rôle of her career. Certainly it is the one which most clearly displays the essential qualities of her art, and in it she has found a part which must always be associated with her. The dancing of Alexander Grant was hardly less remarkable, and over the course of performances both Somes and Farron — faced with less rewarding propositions — have managed to build up telling portrayals with the minimum of basic materials.

After the Covent Garden première Ashton was approached by many European opera houses to reproduce his ballet. Although he has so far resisted all offers, Henze's score has been used by various Continental ballet masters, all of them employing some adaptation of Ashton's scenario, although in most cases this has been given a psychological twist to make it more acceptable to German audiences. The first production after Covent Garden was by the British choreographer Alan Carter in Munich, where settings and costumes were provided by Fabius von Gugel. The first performance was on January 25, 1959, and the cast included Dulce Anaya as Ondine, Franz Baur as Palemon, Inge Bertl as Beatrice and Heino Hallhuber as Tirrenio.

The most recent of the German productions was that by Tatiana Gsovsky, who produced a slightly shortened version for the Berlin State Opera on September 22, 1959. Scenery and costumes were by Werner Schaachtely, and the cast included Judith Dornys (Ondine), Wolfgang Leistner (Palemon), Suse Preisser (Berta) and Manfred Taubert (Tirrenio).

ONDINE IN LOVE: Somes and Fonteyn in the great love pas de deux. *Another scene from* The Royal Ballet *film.* *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

SWAN LAKE *ACT TWO : Beryl Grey and Bryan Ashbridge with the* corps de ballet *from the Opera and Ballet Theatre of Bucharest in the second act of* Swan Lake.

First British Dancers in Bucharest

BRYAN ASHBRIDGE, a principal dancer of the Royal Ballet, talks about the visit he and Beryl Grey made to the Opera and Ballet Theatre in Bucharest, being the first British dancers to appear there, where they danced in Swan Lake **and also gave two concerts. He also gives details of the differences in the production of** Swan Lake **compared with the other versions he knows.**

TO many British people, Bucharest is little more than a name and when Beryl Grey and Bryan Ashbridge left on November 14 to dance at the Opera and Ballet Theatre they were not quite certain what to expect. Changing planes in Brussels they then took a Russian plane on to the capital of Rumania. There they were greeted with searchlights, TV cameras and the whole of the resident company of the theatre at the airport to welcome them.

The town of Bucharest is very flat and a great deal of the old part appears to have been pulled down; most of the remaining ancient buildings being very beautiful churches, of which there are a great number. They found the hotel comfortable and the food good. The thing that perhaps struck them most forcibly was the absence of cars and the quietness at night.

However, they had little time to take in much of their surroundings as it was necessary for them to get down immediately to rehearsing the whole of *Swan Lake,* for they were to dance four days after their arrival. The difficulties of rehearsing with a new company were enormously increased by the Rumanian version of the Ivanov/Tchaikovsky ballet being nearly entirely different from the version they dance with the Royal Ballet; it is almost more difficult to re-learn something that you know well than to learn something completely new. Consequently both of them had to put in a great deal of physical hard work as well as the mental effort involved in trying to figure out all the differences. They had to rehearse for seven hours on the Sunday, then the same period on Monday, before the dress rehearsal on Tuesday. On Wednesday morning they went through the whole ballet to the piano just quietly by themselves trying to work out various details; then on Wednesday night they gave their first performance.

The theatre is large and was completed in about 15 months for a festival. However, it is not really large enough for its present needs and the Rumanians are intending to build another in the very near future. The auditorium has a capacity of just over 2,000 and is about the same size as Covent Garden. It is in red and white and has that particular atmosphere common to most Western European opera houses. The great difference compared with Covent Garden is in the size of the stage, which is considerably deeper and about half as wide again. The Rumanians have very good lighting and equipment capable of every kind of stage effect.

Judging by Bryan Ashbridge's description, this Rumanian *Swan Lake,* which has been arranged and choreographed by Oleg Danovschi, bears a very strong resemblance to the Bourmeister version for the Stanislavsky Theatre Ballet in Moscow which Ashbridge had not seen. It appears to have a similar prologue, in which the human Princess Odette (not Beryl Grey on this occasion as she did not have time to learn it) is first seen walking by the lakeside, when a rock opens up disclosing Von Rothbart, who enfolds her in his wings. She disappears and a swan is then seen floating away across the lake.

The first act proper appears to differ from both the Stanislavsky and Bolshoi versions, and it is certainly markedly different from any of the versions based on Sergueff's reconstruction of the St. Petersburg production.

The scene takes place in front of the castle, which is very solidly built in plaster, taking up about half of the O.P. side of the stage. Up-stage there is a stream and the castle is connected to the mainland of the stage by a drawbridge through which can be seen the castle stairway down which the Prince enters. The stream joins the lake just visible in the background. A general impression of a vast expanse of sky is given by the marvellous use of the huge cyclorama surrounding the stage.

When the curtain rises, a large crowd of nobility and peasants are milling around. For this the theatre makes use of its opera chorus as supers and they form the background to all the big scenes, while the actual dancers are used more down stage. In this way it is possible to include all those groups of people who dress the stage and give it a plausible atmosphere. Some are sitting around gossiping, old men play chess, other groups greet their friends and so on. The main impression of the costumes was of autumnal colouring — russet browns, dark blues and greens — rather similar to the first act of the Bolshoi and Stanislavsky productions.

The Prince enters, coming down the steps of the castle at the same point in the music as in other versions. It is a far more leisurely entrance, however, and he talks to various people on the way. The Tutor and Jester (as in most Soviet versions the Jester replaces the Prince's friend, Benno) await his arrival.

Soon, to the music we use for the *Pas de Six,* eight aristocratic couples start to dance. For a time the Prince talks to his guests, before joining the dancers who surround him. He dances a variation of 32 bars, the boys then dance and the Prince graciously bows out; finally the couples are left to finish the waltz. When this is over the Princess Mother comes out of the castle with her retinue. She is presented with flowers, one of which she gives to the Prince and another to a little girl, implanting the idea that this might possibly be the girl she intends for the Prince's future bride. The Princess Mother then points at the other girls and indicates that the time has come for the Prince to think about choosing a bride. This is a good deal more sensible than the Princess's usual anger because she does not like the company her son keeps. She then invites everyone to a grand ball at which the Prince is to choose his future wife. The Prince himself is not unduly horrified at this suggestion as he always knew that he would have to find a bride when he reached a marriageable age — so he is merely rather depressed as he bows to the inevitable. The Princess Mother leaves and the *Pas de Trois* follows.

Here again is found a significant difference

EVIL STEPS IN : Prince Siegfried (Ashbridge) being separated by Von Rothbart from Odette (Beryl Grey) in the second act of the Bucharest Swan Lake.

from the Sergueff version, because the *Pas de Trois* is here integrated into the general production rather than appearing to be a sort of cabaret to amuse the guests. It opens with the Prince dancing with one of the two girls. Then the other girl dances a variation followed by one from the boy. Finally the first girl dances her variation, and all three finish together in the coda. The Prince gets up and bows while the Tutor partners the other girl. The Jester now dances a short variation to the music we usually associate with the episode between the leading peasant girl and the Tutor, and before leaving the nobles perform a Polonaise to the music usually used for the peasant dance.

Eventually the Prince, the Jester and the Tutor are left alone on the stage. To some music not in the Sergueff version, the Prince reads a book, then takes up a rose and contemplatively considers its beauty. In a wistful way he looks across at the lake. The Jester, seeing this melancholy mood, tries to amuse the Prince, who tells him to stop. The Jester then sits down and plays on a mandoline; suddenly he sees the swans on the lake and as the Prince is about to return to the castle he too sees them. The Jester goes to get the Prince's bow so that he can go and hunt. The curtain falls.

In many ways the production of this act was superior to the generally accepted versions in Western Europe. In the first place it makes more sense with everything following logically, and the various dances emerging out of the production instead of appearing to be mere interpolations. The fact that the Prince dances in this act serves to make the whole rôle more interesting and also offers the opportunity of developing a character rather than being a cardboard Prince who has to sit around most of the time with no dancing to do. Another great improvement was the inclusion of the opera chorus, who acted throughout with great authority and really appeared to "live" these all-important subordinate characters. In fact the whole company of well over a hundred acted with a complete conviction, and you never saw people standing about, either just doing nothing or furiously reacting to less than nothing.

In the second act the idea is basically the same as almost every other version. In Bucharest they have 38 swans instead of the 32 used in most big British productions, and there are four leading swans dancing instead of the usual two. There is no Benno and, mercifully, no huntsmen.

The curtain rises upon a wooded scene with the lake and a large expanse of cyclorama sky. Upstage there is Von Rothbart's rock and the landscape around and into the distance is more sinister than in the foreground — the rocks looking positively black and evil. The Prince enters and sees the swans on the lake, forming a natural continuation from the end of the previous act. He tries to shoot them but is stopped by Von Rothbart, who suddenly appears on his rock. The Prince then goes up to the back to see what is happening, before running off.

Instead of Odette's usual entrance, which is a run on and *pas de chat* landing in 4th position *croisé*, she comes up back centre on a trap, giving the impression that she has just come up out of the lake. Ashbridge did not think this entrance so effective as the usual one as it is far less dramatic, more like Giselle's entrance from the grave in the second act of *Giselle*. From then on both Grey and Ashbridge did the choreography of the Sergueff version. After their mime, Von Rothbart appears behind Siegfried but visible to Odette. The Prince turns, and suddenly comes face to face with him. Gradually Siegfried backs off stage followed by Odette. The rest of the dances for the swans are more or less the same as in the Western versions — for the cygnets, for the leading swans, the *adage*, Odette's variation and so on. At the end Odette naturally ends on Siegfried's knee instead of the non-existent Benno's, and they are parted by Von Rothbart, who takes Odette away. The idea is clearly conveyed that Odette and the Prince combined together possess a greater power than Von Rothbart, therefore his principal aim throughout the ballet — and this becomes even more apparent when we come to consider the fourth act — must be to keep the two lovers apart.

(To be continued)

NEXT MONTH Bryan Ashbridge will talk about the differences in the production of the third and fourth acts of Swan Lake **in Bucharest as well as saying something about the dancers and the reception that he and Beryl Grey received.**

From the Land of Queen Thamar

continued from page 10

and the style and elegant line of the two ladies was well realised. Later, in *Karachokheli*, the people of the streets indulged in a comic game of football which involved in a great deal of fast sprinting that only moved the players a few feet further forward rather in the manner of the old silent films. Other dances reflected the life of the petty traders with movements suggestive of their calling. And of course we had the inevitable, but always delightful, wrestling match in which one man is formed of two tightly clutching puppets. All these scenes from Tbilisi life were notable for the characterisation with which the dancers invested each and every rôle.

Finally the men indulged in a competition in which each tried to outvie the other in quite remarkable feats — circling the stage on their knees, dancing on full point and jumping into the air and returning back on to full point or finishing in a kind of *arabesque* — it all turned into a zany carnival in which one's natural excitement was mingled with horrific anticipation as to what must be happening to those toes and knees and how long it was possible for human bones to stand up to such treatment.

"Is the company better than the Moiseyev company from Moscow?" is a question that most people will inevitably ask. The question is hardly relevant because whereas the Moscow company embraces almost the whole of Russia, the Georgian group is only concerned with one particular region, and a rather small one at that. The way they have managed to ring the changes on these limitations is remarkable and, without question, they are the best-dressed folklore company we have seen. Possibly the mountains and the romances woven around the legends of Queen Thamar had a good deal to do with the fact that Georgians had great appeal for me — judging by their sell-out London season and their enormously successful TV appearances it would seem that several million other people felt rather the same way.

Moments of Truth

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

The Three Graces, by Serge Lifar (Cassell, 21*s.*).

IT was Théophile Gautier, and a number of lithographers, who immortalised the three great ballerinas of the Romantic Era — Taglioni, Elssler and Grisi. Now Serge Lifar has attempted the same thing with the three great ballerinas of the early part of this century — Pavlova, Karsavina and Spessitzeva. He sub-titles this volume — The Legends and the Truth. Unfortunately the Muse of Truth is an elusive one to capture and it is the brave knight who will ever proclaim, especially in print and between two boards, that he has captured her *in toto* — portions of her anatomy may be within your grasp while other parts elude you completely.

In his quest of Truth, Lifar opens with a brief history of the development of ballet and accuses the historians of being in error when they said that the first recorded performance took place at "Taranto". If they did then they were most certainly wrong because that famous wedding feast for the Duke of Milan and Isabella of Aragon took place in Tortona. You see what I mean about — Truth? Amongst a whole collection of doubtful truths he goes on to call "Auguste" Bournonville, Gustave.

So when Lifar gets to the main body of his book, his revelations about his three heroines of this century become tinged with doubt. But as he quotes endlessly from other writings there can be no doubt that they were *written* — but were they all right? For instance he more or less delivers a *coup de grace* in the case of Pavlova, with an even deeper sword thrust between the shoulder blades of her friend and biographer — Victor Dandré. Having eulogised her, he later goes on to cut her down by magnifying all her mistakes. With Karsavina, however, he cannot go far from the whole truth because no ballerina has ever written better about herself — or ever written better, period. Her writings, quoted at length, are the structure upon which Lifar has hung his essay.

With his third Grace, however, Lifar is on surer ground because his life as a dancer was closely connected with Olga Spessitzeva. In fact this part of the book is worth all the rest put together. The tragic life of this possibly greatest classical dancer of all time is told with emotion and understanding.

So much of Lifar's own achievements, his likes and dislikes, are woven into the texture of this volume that the reader is left to wonder in the end whether Lifar has not really awarded the golden apple to himself. It is possibly only the Ivor Guests of this world who are the right ones to write of "truths", but when they want to find out about Spessitzeva then this book will prove invaluable to them.

Nikitina, by Herself (Allan Wingate, 21*s.*).

MORE truths, and rather expensive ones for such a slim volume, from one of the last ballerinas of the Diaghilev Ballet — Alice Nikitina. The main impression left by Herself's autobiography is that Herself's life was incessantly punctuated by illness. She is very outspoken — about her life and her achievements, her friend Lord R and about her feelings for those around her in the Diaghilev Ballet. Her life, from her early days in Russia until she made her début as a singer in Palermo, could make a film-script applicable to the general conception of any ballerina's life up to the beginning of the Second World War. The whole book is rather gossipy and will entertain you if you read the columns devoted to this kind of thing in the popular newspapers. Unfortunately we are apt to forget what we have read the moment the paper falls off our knees — and this I feel is a pity when you think of the number of important rôles that Nikitina created during that interesting last period of Diaghilev's life.

Truth from the Camera

Ballet 9, by Serge Lido (A. & C. Black, 45*s.*).

Ballet in Colour, introduced by Arnold Haskell (Batsford, 12*s.* 6*d.*).

AS we cannot get away from the subject of truth, then we are on safer ground with the camera — or so tradition declares. Me, I am not so sure. Tradition certainly holds good in the latest collection of pictures from Serge Lido, in many ways his best to date. His pictures of Ashton's *Ondine* are beautiful and have a soft quality in keeping with the mood of the ballet. A full page of Fonteyn kneeling on the ground considering her own shadow is a masterpiece, but then all these pictures of her have captured, for all time, her rather elusive quality so rarely shown up in pictures. Very different to Markova and Toumanova, both well represented in this volume, who have invariably shown up wonderfully in photographs. But besides these great ballerinas there are plenty of other things to make this collection a "must" for every ballet bibliophile. For his special feature this year, Lido has chosen "Composers" (Britain is represented only by John Addison), and these candid camera shots are rather revealing.

I hope that the camera was lying in most of the colour pictures in the *Ballet in Colour* book. Some of them are unfortunate, to say the least — Skorik and Hallhuber have jaundice, Danilova looks at something nasty on the floor, Markova looks as though she has just left Shangri-la. The pictures hardly illustrate the short essays by Haskell at the beginning of the book. The person who first uttered about "the camera not lying" was obviously not referring to colour photography.

The Fading Year

The Ballet Annual, 14. Edited by Arnold L. Haskell (A. & C. Black, 30*s.*).

PLUM puddings come every year and we hope to get the sixpence — we usually do and then it comes as an anti-climax. For fourteen years we have had *Ballet Annual* and we look forward to it — *and* we get the sixpence and somehow it always seems to be the same one. I don't quite know what we expect to be different — possibly stand-up scenes from ballets and ballerinas popping up as you open the pages. However. there are always the plums, and this year's plum is that the word *sergelifar* also applies to the long tight pants worn by paratroopers. This Maurice Tassart tells in his "The Serge Lifar Story". As is usual the most interesting plum is supplied by Ivor Guest in his article "Russian Dancers in London before Diaghilev" and also in the quality of the photographs which are splendidly reproduced throughout. Altogether the same recipe, the same ingredients mixed in the same bowl and stirred by the same masterly hands by most of the same chefs, the same pudding — but sometimes I wish I could get the lucky pig instead of the sixpence.

P. W.

Ballet Highlights

NEW RECORDS

DECCA have brought out a new "Favourite Ballet Music" series of 10-inch records, moderately priced at 19*s.* 10½*d.*, that should help to solve many Christmas present problems. Taken from fuller 12-inch recordings, all the discs in the first batch that I have heard so far offer top-quality reproduction — in one or two cases even improving on the high technical standard of the original parent record — and in terms of playing time are very good value indeed.

Martinon's performances with the Israel Philharmonic of the Meyerbeer-Lambert music for *Les Patineurs* and the ballet music from Massenet's *Le Cid* (BR 3015) include everything that was on the 12-inch version except for a single dance in each case. The *Aubade* is omitted from the Massenet, but it is the *Pas de Trois* that is missing from *Les Patineurs,* not the *Ensemble* (No. 4) as stated on the sleeve. Martinon's tempi would scarcely accommodate Ashton's choreography, and anyone chiefly interested in this side of the record as a souvenir of the ballet should find it well worth spending another 1*s.* 1½*d.* to have the Ace of Clubs re-issue of Irving's earlier recordings of the same coupling (ACL 62), which gives the whole of *Les Patineurs.*

The Israel Philharmonic's recording of *La Boutique Fantasque* in its original 12-inch form had Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice* as fill-up. Issued by itself on BR 3014, the *Boutique* performance still includes all the linking mime passages often omitted on records, except for the lead-in to the Poodles' Dance, the only actual dance for which space could not be found on the 10-inch. Here again, it is worth considering an Ace of Clubs alternative — Ansermet's even more magical performance on ACL 7, which includes the poodles, though not all the mime episodes.

A disc of "highlights" from *Giselle* (BR 3016) is a cut-down version of Martinon's abridged recording of the ballet, which I reviewed in November. The sleeve promises everything that was on the 12-inch, but quite a few cuts have naturally had to be made. Even so, the selection takes in all the important material, and the performance, if not ideal, is enjoyable.

The same can be said of the Suisse Romande Orchestra's playing, under Ansermet, of excerpts from *Swan Lake* (BR 3011), *The Nutcracker* (BR 3012) and *Coppélia* (BR 3013), all taken from Ansermet's complete or substantially complete sets. The material has been sensibly chosen in each case to include all the dances that would most likely be considered essential by the ballet-lover, as distinct from the ordinary record-collector.

David Hunt.

GREAT DANCERS AT PUBLICATION PARTY: To celebrate the publication of Walter Terry's new book, Ballet, *a party was given at the Four Seasons restaurant in New York. Terry, who is the dance critic of the* New York Herald Tribune, *is seen centre surrounded by Alicia Markova, Martha Graham, Alexandra Danilova and Edward Villella, the new star of New York City Ballet. Photo: Jack Mitchell.*

curtain up!

Away from the Winter

THOSE dreary late winter months which are so unattractive in England are being avoided by the Royal Ballet's itinerant section this year. Their South African tour will keep them in the sunshine from the beginning of February to the end of April. The integration of the two companies goes even further than on their previous Australian tour because Brian Shaw, Bryan Ashbridge, Graham Usher, William Wilson and Antoinette Sibley will be with the company for the whole tour — and so will Beryl Grey, who returns to the Royal Ballet as a guest ballerina. Nadia Nerina, Svetlana Beriosova, Donald MacLeary and Gary Burne will also spend part of the time with the company.

The full-length ballets to be taken are *The Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake* and *Giselle*. The shorter works include one from De Valois—*The Rake's Progress*; one from Ashton — *Les Patineurs*; one from Cranko — *Sweeney Todd*; one from MacMillan — *Solitaire*; and Fokine's *Les Sylphides*. Presumably there will also be a number of the *divertissements* which now form a regular part of this company's programmes.

People who, like myself, feel deeply about these things will be glad to know that the Pietermaritzburg performances will be given before mixed audiences and that there will be performances in both Johannesburg and Cape Town before entirely non-European audiences. That there could not have been more is, of course, sad, but at least some members of the non-European public will get a chance of seeing the company.

Into Russia

SO often have we announced that one American company or another will be going to Russia and so often have the negotiations broken down that I am a bit sceptical of ever making such a preliminary announcement again. However, as far as it is possible to see it would appear that American Ballet Theatre may well be the first American ballet company to dance in the U.S.S.R. Sponsored by the President's Special International Programme for Cultural Presentations and administered by ANTA, the company is tentatively scheduled to appear in Russia during the early summer. This will follow Ballet Theatre's 20th Anniversary season at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

It will not be the company's first appearance behind the Iron Curtain because during the last European tour in 1958 they went to Poland. It was also during this tour that they lost the sets and costumes for 16 ballets in a fire. Since then they have been rebuilding the old and planning new works.

Massine for Nervi

A FIGURE once more familiar to British audiences than he is today was recently seen around the vicinity of the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill. It was Leonide Massine, who paid a flying visit to London to audition dancers for the company he is forming for the forthcoming festival in Nervi, near Genoa, next June. At the studio of the Rambert School he patiently looked at a great number of dancers and at the moment the British dancers he has signed-up are Jenny Trevelyan (de Vos Studio), Linda Jones (Ballet Rambert School), John Taylor (pupil of Andrew Hardie), Anna Vaughan (Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet).

Harry Haythorne, who is Massine's representative, worked with the great choreographer on several occasions both when he was with the International and also the Metropolitan companies. He recently came into contact with Massine again when he was recording Balanchine's *Serenade* in Labanotation for La Scala.

Massine tells me that he plans to present a repertory of about ten ballets at Nervi, not all by himself, though including a revival of his *Choreartium*, which was first given by the de Basil company in 1933, and his *Don Giovanni*, given at La Scala in 1958.

Although the company is not intended to become a permanent group, Massine says that he hopes to perform in a few other places and he hopes to re-form the company each year for summer festivals. I seem to remember that Jerome Robbins had no intention of forming a permanent company when he got together a small group for the Spoleto Festival — and look where *that* got him!

Ballet for Schools

SPECIAL performances for the audience of tomorrow are not at all plentiful, but Ballet Rambert, pioneering as usual, is tackling the job in a masterful way. They now give special performances for schools in every town that they visit. Each of these performances — usually *Coppélia* — starts with a lecture in which David Ellis shows what happens on the stage before almost every performance. Showing the bare stage, he then goes on to give a practical demonstration, with the help of the stage-hands, of the stage being set up, how different lighting effects are possible and how the dancers warm up. So successful are these "see how it works" performances that recently in Hanley over 2,000 children packed in — and apparently adored every moment of it.

Television is also playing its part, as I found out the other day when, quite by chance, I turned on the TV in the middle of a schools programme — the programme was Associated-Rediffusion's "The Artist in the Modern World" series.

In an admirable and extremely intelligent programme, Ernest Bradbury (music critic of the *Yorkshire Post*) showed how modern music has found its shape, beginning with music from Africa and the Far East. Of particular interest to ballet-lovers was the talk by Denis Apivor, composer of *Blood Wedding*, which was then demonstrated by Anne Heaton and Donald MacLeary, who played the two principal rôles so often in the Royal Ballet's production. These two dancers also gave danced excerpts from Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and *Apollon Musagète*. The solo from the former was particularly interesting as it had been taught to Heaton by Lydia Sokolova, who originally created the principal rôle in this work.

British Teacher in Switzerland

SO many people apparently want to learn to dance in England, so many also want to be perfected, yet it seems almost impossible to hold good teachers down to this island for any length of time. So many teachers, including the great Vera Volkova, have left us that I begin to wonder if there is something seriously wrong — is it the climate or just the average dancer's rather desultory approach to the dance? I hope it does not mean that because that fine teacher

Kathleen Crofton goes to the Stadtstheater, Zurich, for January and February as guest teacher that she will eventually stay in Switzerland permanently. I notice that these guest appearances abroad are often the preliminary moves before final departure, but possibly in this case I may be wrong; I hope so, because Kathleen Crofton is one of the finest teachers now working in Britain. While she is away, Peter Wright will deputise for her in her studio near Leicester Square.

Cork goes professional

APART from visiting companies the Irish, who are one of the world's best ballet audiences, do not see a great deal of ballet. Even so, for thirteen years Joan Denise Moriarty's amateur ballet company, known as the Cork Ballet Company, has flourished and produced most of the world's classics. Now the company is to get financial aid from the Arts Council of Ireland and from various prominent Irish firms so that the company can achieve professional status, thus being Ireland's first company to do so. They opened at the Palace Theatre, Cork, on December 14, and a tour follows.

The Associate Director is Stanley Judson, formerly a principal dancer of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and he has been training the dancers and rehearsing the ballets since September.

As this venture will stand or fall on the support of the Irish public, let us hope that they reward all this enthusiasm and enterprise by giving of their support as much as possible.

Yugoslav star on the move

ONE of the dancers working with Kathleen Crofton at the present is Jelko Juresha. Originally a pupil of Ana Roje at her International Ballet School in Split, he has only been dancing for about four years. Already he has become one of Yugoslavia's principal dancers and that country has already given the world a formidable collection including Mia Slavenska, Igor Youskevitch, Milorad Miskovitch, Veronika Mlakaar, Vassili Sulich and Milko Sparemblek, to mention only a few. After Ana Roje's company appeared with great success at the festival in Bermuda last summer, Juresha danced in Holland, Ireland and Switzerland with Belinda Wright, and also danced with her at a Royal Command Variety performance in the North of England. At Christmas he appears in the TV *Sleeping Beauty*, in which Margot Fonteyn stars. After that he leaves for Italy as he has been chosen by Massine to be a soloist in his company for the Nervi Festival.

Spain in Turkey

FALLA'S *El Amor Brujo* might seem to be a rather surprising choice of ballet for the Opera House in Ankara. Nevertheless it is what they chose to see and they asked Dame Ninette de Valois, who has been responsible for doing so much work in Turkey, to choose a choreographer. Her choice was Robert Harrold, previously a Rambert dancer and later a choreographer at Glyndebourne, who is also a great authority on the dance of Spain. He left early in December to undertake this job and he was given the assistance of Valerie Taylor, soloist of the Royal Ballet. Both expect to remain in Turkey for some time.

How ignorant can you be

SOME of the remarks overheard at the ballet are still almost too good to be true, but they are too bizarre to be invented.

There was, for instance, the lady who told her children in the interval before the last act of *Swan Lake*: "Now the big swan comes back and tells all the little swans what a lovely time she had at the ball".

Capping this, however, was a conversation I overheard on my way to Covent Garden. A little girl noticed the statuette of Pavlova in the foyer. "Did she ever dance with Fonteyn, mummy?" Mummy indicated that she thought not. "Was she as good as Fonteyn, mummy?" Mummy thought she might have been, and then added reflectively, "I wonder what she's doing now?"

The 'Doctor' Sets it Down

DR. JULIAN BRAUNSWEG, director, impresario and general factotum of London's Festival Ballet, is writing the story of his life — and quite right too. There is no reason why his artistic director, Anton Dolin, should write all the autobiographies. Dr. Braunsweg, famed for saying of his company "verrie art.stic. We haf fantastic success," would have a lively story to tell, as I hear he has no intention of whitewashing himself or glossing over some of the "methods" of impresarios.

He will doubtless include the story of how he once worked for Diaghilev. Pointing to the holes in the shoes he was wearing, Diaghilev is said to have warned Braunsweg that if he wanted to become an impresario of ballet he too must expect to be able to afford nothing better. Dr. Braunsweg ignored the advice and has done something that Diaghilev could never do — he has made ballet pay. But Diaghilev was the one who made ballet history.

Link with Pavlova

THE recent death of Walford Hyden robs us of another link with Anna Pavlova. For several years her musical director, he wrote one of the many books about the great ballerina who held so strong a sway on audiences of all sorts in all parts of the world. Like all others who wrote about Pavlova, he was unable to catch the real secret of her universal success, but also like all the others he added a few more details to the composite portrait which will keep her memory alive in future years.

happy birthday to...

		January
Herbert Bliss	New York City Ballet	21
Keith Rosson	The Royal Ballet	24
Maria Tallchief	New York City Ballet	24
Anne Stringer	Royal Ballet Organisation	26
Christine Jope	London's Festival Ballet	26
Franklin White	The Royal Ballet	27
Irène Skorik		27
Betty Pope	Canadian National Ballet	28
Rosella Hightower	De Cuevas International Ballet	30
George Skibine	The Paris Opéra	30
		February
David Shields	Royal Winnipeg Ballet	1
Clare Duncan	London's Festival Ballet	2
Ron Murray	American Ballet Theatre	5
Enrique Martinez	American Ballet Theatre	8
David Scott		9
Peter Cazalet	London's Festival Ballet	10
John Gilpin	London's Festival Ballet	10
Michel Nunes	De Cuevas International Ballet	12
Margo Mik'osy	De Cuevas International Ballet	13
Ole Palle Hansen	Royal Danish Ballet	14
Maryon Lane	The Royal Ballet	15
David Mahler	Canadian National Ballet	16
Richard Ellis	Teaching in Chicago	19
Gerd Larsen	The Royal Ballet	20
Wolfgang Brunner	Stadtstheater, Zurich	22
Alexander Grant	The Royal Ballet	22

Dancer You Will Know

DEBRA WAYNE

BORN in Southsea on June 22, 1937. Started to dance in Newcastle with Miss Nellie Potts at the age of five. Joined the Royal Ballet School in September, 1953, and graduated to the company at Covent Garden in February, 1955. Creation (for Sunday Ballet Club): Dancer in Gary Burne's Quatre en Rouge. *Rôles: Leading Wili in* Giselle; Pas de Trois, Pas de Six, *Leading Swan and Cygnet in* Swan Lake; *Florestan's Sister in* The Sleeping Beauty; *Dawn in* Coppélia; *Both Blue Girls in* Les Patineurs; *Fox Trot in* Façade; *Nymph in* Daphnis and Chloë.

WE forget precisely when we first noticed Debra Wayne, but we will never be able to forget how she first came to our attention. Captioning a Sunday Ballet Club photograph from a horribly blurred proof, we saw a girl doing a beautiful *jeté* and marked it "*Jeté* from Sibley". When the block was properly printed it remained a most beautiful jump—but to our embarrassment it was "from *Wayne*"! Not only was this one of the silliest things to happen to us since we started, but it has also ever more left our guilt-ridden consciences with an almost pathological awareness of Miss Wayne and her jump!

Yet that there is more to her than saltatory prowess, was apparent from some well-judged performances in the *Swan Lake pas de trois*, and even in the *corps de ballet* she has consistently shown neat, interesting dancing. It is perhaps unfortunate that the solo rôle she has been seen in most frequently is the stationary Blue Girl of *Les Patineurs*, for the part is one which will always be associated with Rowena Jackson's *tour de force* until we have been replaced by beardless youths. Yet by any other standards, Wayne's are good *fouettés* and getting better. Fickle rumour has it that she is to be Odile in the school production of *Swan Lake* — this could be more than just 32 turning-points.

THE R.A.D. GALA
at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on November 26.

IT is a great compliment to Margot Fonteyn that such is the love and respect she commands throughout the world that she just has to raise her elegant finger and the best dancers in France, America, Poland and really from anywhere will rush to her aid in raising money for her pet charity. Of course we know that Fonteyn did a sight more than just raise a finger to get the programme together for the Gala Matinée, in aid of the Royal Academy of Dancing, of which she is President, at Drury Lane on November 26. Few Presidents, of any organisation, could have done more personally to ensure that it was all a success. Journeys abroad, endless meetings and mountains of correspondence were dealt with personally by her — all this on top of her own performances with the Royal Ballet, which have been more numerous than for some time past. She deserved all our sincerely-felt good wishes, and the result was as triumphantly successful for the cause as it was delightful to behold.

Of late we have had, and not without reason, some harsh things to say about galas, but for this there could only be praise. Possibly it had something to do with the fact that it was a matinée, which in these days, when everyone should be working in the afternoons, seems to take on an immoral aspect almost on a parallel with a Roman orgy. To add to the gala aspect of it all the female section of the audience, which was decidedly predominant, got themselves up in the most raffish assortment of millinery that can have known no equal since the last Mardi Gras in Rio.

But look away from this carnival of headgear for a moment and see what is happening on the stage — *A Moral Tale* the programme tells us. Where the moral was in this work by Meriel Evans for members of the R.A.D. Scholar Classes, completely eluded me. A little girl in pink blows bubbles and a group of children, senior to her in various degrees, perform some of the more elementary steps in the classical vocabulary around her to some music of Gluck which was once associated with Fokine's *Don Juan.*

Meriel Evans seems to have got just the hang of what you should give to students and what you should not. The dances for the various groups — Pink (Everything comes to her who waits), Green (We never share unless it suits us), Blue (Left out of the fun) — were very well arranged, and I admired the way that she rang the changes on the limited range at her disposal. Her choreography was also very musical. All the students performed with completely unself-conscious charm, precision and a natural feeling for the stage, all of which was enhanced by some fresh and elegant Kate Greenaway-like costumes designed by Royal Ballet soloist Derek Rencher, It made a good piece upon which to open the performance and it was also just the right length.

Possibly the "moral" to be learned from the work was "don't blow bubbles on the stage if famous dancers are to appear on it after you've gone" because the resulting dampness caused John Gilpin to have what looked like a quite nasty fall during his *Harlequinade pas de deux* with Belinda Wright. However he made a very quick recovery and ended with his usual brio, and he got a rousing reception, as also did Belinda Wright.

NOCTURNE: Two Polish stars — Barbara Bittner and Witold Gruca — in the pas de deux *to Chopin music that they gave at the R.A.D. Gala Matinée.*

Photo: Roy Round.

This Festival Ballet contribution was followed by one from Ballet Rambert, whose choice of the variation for the Girl in Pink, from Cranko's *La Reja,* and danced by Lucette Aldous, was a rather curious one. Its pseudo-Spanish steps look a bit strange when taken away from the work itself, which is all in this kind of idiom. The Scarlatti sonatas also seemed less effective when played by an orchestra instead of the harpsichord, which was the original accompaniment when the ballet was first given at Sadler's Wells. Nevertheless, Aldous gave it all with a great sense of fun and her technique has improved so much that it almost appeared to be a virtuoso solo.

The special creation for the matinée was a *pas de deux* for Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes by Frederick Ashton. Taken from the second scene of Glazunov's *Raymonda,* when Raymonda sees her fiancé Jean de Brienne in a vision and dances with him, it has been beautifully arranged into a concert piece.

The curtain opens on Fonteyn standing on some steps looking out into the night. Her whole attitude is of yearning and expectancy. Somes enters and they dance a love passage full of tenderness and yet with that urgency which is inevitable during those brief moments of love in wartime. The moment comes for him to return to the Crusades and after minutes of subdued agony he leaves.

Like Fokine, Ashton has developed an utterance that is very personal, and he uses the classical vocabulary with a poetic twist rather than in the ordered line of prose. Also like Fokine he works on a decidedly limited vocabulary, and it is the way he can use it that makes him the genius he undoubtedly is. He resorts to no clever tricks, no attempts at startling innovations, and his dance ebbs, flows and soars with the music.

The unseeing eye might possibly say that here is a *pas de deux* not far removed from what Fonteyn and Somes dance in *Ondine.* In some respects the unseeing eye would be right, for the protagonists have many similarities. But in this Fonteyn is a mortal, not a supernatural Naiad, and her movements and the emotion she conveys are those of a mortal, a young girl very much in love. She turns it into a long drawn-out wistful sigh. Both she and Ashton's choreography have the power to draw the audience into their world, to become involved with their emotions and to leave you, at the end, with a sense of regret.

Somes, in a Henry V hair-do, was the perfect complement to her, as always. A man of action who, when he can leave the battlefield for a short time, can become the gentle lover. I found the tabard, which he wears on entering and dons again when leaving, a bit worrying. This sandwich-board-like garment is unsympathetic to dance movement and yet it served its purpose in proving that this cavalier, unlike most cavaliers in ballet, can also show his prowess on the battlefield. This *pas de deux* makes me itch to see Ashton create his version of the full-length *Raymonda.*

In complete contrast was the "Cool" excerpt from *West Side Story* which followed and which also ended the first part of the programme. This vital piece of dancing, brilliantly choreographed by Jerome Robbins, has been considered at length in a previous issue so there is not much more

to say except that it brought something typically American to the programme and it was given by the boys and girls with typically American verve. Possibly it meant little to people who had not seen it in its own context, and the singing may have seemed curious in a dance programme, but there is a decided place for this kind of thing in concert programmes provided they are the best of their kind — this is the best of its kind.

The opening of the second part brought back an artist long beloved by London audiences — Jean Babilée. His trio, *Balance à Trois,* for two athletic boys and one athletic girl limbering up both physically and amatorially in a gymnasium, had not been seen in London before. If slight in theme there is nothing very slight in its choreographic construction. The girl (Claire Sombert) limbers up in a solo and is soon joined by a boy (Babilée) who flirts with her. This gymnastic idyll is soon interrupted by the entrance of a plodding runner (Gerard Ohn) apparently intent on out-Bannistering Roger Bannister. The rest of the ballet is taken up with both athletes trying to outdo the other in gymnastic contortions in their attempts at capturing the girl's affections.

It is so full of humour that it becomes one of the very short list of ballets that can produce a belly-laugh — even from a be-hatted matinée audience. The weakest section is the solo for the girl and although Sombert danced it well, and showed some exciting elevation, it makes a rather ponderous opening. Gerard Ohn is excellent as the 2nd Athlete and manages to create an ox-like creature, quite brainless and conscious only of his physique and obsessed with the desire of running a mile a minute. His height also provides a comic contrast with the mercurial Babilée.

In so many rôles do we have to watch Babilée brood and scowl that it is a pleasant change to see him smile. His humour all through this work is delicious and so infectious that the girl catches it and together they have private jokes at the expense of the other athlete. But when he wants to be, what a glorious dancer Babilée is ! No other artist today seems to have that panther-like grace, so masculine yet so sensual. No other artist's limbs can make love to a girl so emphatically without the two bodies even touching. This is something that the Russian dancers of the Diaghilev Ballet could do and which no other dancers of today, including the Russians, seem capable of.

In this work, Babilée shows his greatest understanding of the art of choreography since his initial choreographic venture — *L'Amour et son Amour.* The pleasant and drily witty score of Jean Michel Damase was also conducted by him.

Leaving humour behind we moved back to moonlit yearning again with two dancers from Poland — Barbara Bittner and Witold Gruca. Their Chopin *Nocturne* was choreographed by Jerzy Kaplinski and played by the Royal Ballet's Jean Gilbert. It rather suffered from following Ashton's *pas de deux* because thematically it was vaguely similar. Comparing the two choreographers is a little like looking at two portraits of Harlequin — one from Pollock's penny-plain-twopence-coloured prints and the other from Picasso in his "Blue" period. The reader can decide which is which. The Polish choreography was full of "expression" and nostalgia of a rather energetic kind which today seems rather obvious when compared with the filigree subtleties that Britain's Number One choreographer has now developed. Both Polish artists went through their moonlit rendezvous with great distinction and it would be very interesting to see Bittner, who appears to be a strong technician, in one of the great classics.

RAYMONDA : Margot Fonteyn in the pas de deux *created by Frederick Ashton for her and Michael Somes based on an episode from Glazunov's full-length ballet.*
Photo : Roy Round.

The male *ensemble* for Roland Petit, George Reich and twelve musketeers from the former's full-length work, *Cyrano de Bergerac,* took me back over thirty years. It was on this same stage that we were once roused in a very similar way by Dennis King and a host of Ziegfeld's singing Gascons in Friml's musical *The Three Musketeers.* All very spirited stuff this and as stirring for a matinée audience today as it was then. Also a good rouser before Fonteyn's second appearance — this time in the *Casse Noisette pas de deux* also partnered by Michael Somes.

The version they dance is different to what we usually see. It was taught them by Tamara Karsavina and is the Petipa version that she danced in St. Petersburg. It is much softer and more in keeping with the fairy-land subject of the ballet than is that rather hard and brilliant version that has been burnished through the years until it has become a technical firework display.

A grand finale was supplied by the male members of the Georgian State Dance Company giving what the programme called *Khevsur Suite,* but which in actual fact was a mélange of their most spectacular steps.

Altogether a predominatingly male programme which should have served as inspiration to those of our dancers who were able to see it. Fonteyn, by this performance and the work she personally put into it, has proved that she in England is the only person who knows how to present a programme when it has the appellation "Gala". **P. W.**

THE ROYAL BALLET at Covent Garden

"Symphonic" returns

TWO of Frederick Ashton's finest works — *Symphonic Variations* and *Daphnis and Chloë* — with Margot Fonteyn returned to the programme at Covent Garden on November 21, and Cranko's *Pineapple Poll* had a new cast.

Since its first performance in 1946, the critics have explored *Symphonic Variations* fairly thoroughly. The favourite line of criticism in the past has been that although Ashton frequently adheres to the score's rhythmical structure, and derives great inspiration from it, there are occasions when the dance literally soars above the music and becomes independent of it, as though Franck himself had incorporated an extra melody

somehow. This old line still holds good.

It can legitimately be claimed that *Symphonic Variations* is one of those rare works in which the choreography is more exalted than the music. It wears well. No dancer has added his or her bit or made adjustments to the choreography to suit personal style. The ballet is danced in the spirit of rapt dedication and, as such, it becomes a delicate, almost mystical, experience. There is something in the nature of a cold laboratory experience about the work — but if Ashton's analysis of the score has been strictly scientific and analytical (and I don't believe it has), his use of its melody, rhythm and decoration has managed to fuse science with pure poetry.

It could so easily have turned out to be a rather loose form of ballet — contrasting solos juxtaposed but without relation or link between them. Ashton gives the music a deeper artistic significance. Relations are established between the variations, the development is continuous, and an element of pleasant surprise is often incorporated.

The most unexplored tract of the ballet is its actual choreography, and it is high time that it was subjected to a more detailed analysis than I propose to direct to it here. The choreographic devices, not Ashton signatures in this work, are the simplest.

Fonteyn crooks her arm around Somes' head as he promenades her *arabesques*. Four dancers with hands linked wend their way lightly upstage, backs to audience. A moment later six dancers repeat the same half-circular pattern, only to break into three pairs. Fonteyn *chainés* around her partner in the smallest circle, finishing the movement with one arm spiralling upwards. And, starting at opposite points on a diagonal plane, Fonteyn and Somes pass each other mid-stage in *grands jetés en tournant*, which are followed by simple hops in *arabesque*.

The present cast — Fonteyn, Somes, Page, Shaw, Lindsay and Trecu — is an excellent one, and although I consider two of the dancers are slightly less satisfactory, I would be chary in suggesting alternatives. Somes now shows too much strain and tends to buckle after his *tours :* Lindsay dances well, but I would prefer her to indulge in fewer faint smiles. Shaw and Trecu are equally good in their different ways — Shaw, with his agility and speed, and Trecu, more substantial and more pleasantly anonymous, with his lovely soft and strong *pliés*.

The latest cast for *Pineapple Poll*, which opened the programme, was Wells (Poll), Grant (Belaye) and Powell (Jasper). It is nowhere near as shipshape as the Park-Blair-Holden trio.

Grant's professional skill certainly enables him to make his portrait entertaining, but I got the impression that the captain was entertaining his crew cabaret-style on the quarter deck, and not commanding them. One will never be quite certain of the extent of Massine's influence upon Cranko, and therefore one hesitates before attacking Grant, who has been more obviously indoctrinated by Massine, in a Massine-type work such as this. He seems over-anxious to impress and does, in fact, do too much with the actual steps. The sad fact is that this becomes rather tiresome after a while, and interferes with our enjoyment of the farce.

Lynx-eyed, vivacious, and writhing in a costume that appeared to be too big for him, I was left with the impression that Grant would make a splendid Golden Slave in *Schéhérazade*. Doreen Wells has improved since seen at Streatham, but after her tasty performance in the *Tritsch-Tratsch* polka, perhaps I expected too much of her. She shows a tendency towards relying on soubrette clichés and becoming a kind of Victorian "sex-kitten" in the rôle.

Ray Powell, is more satisfactory, although essentially modern and rather like one of the urchins who roll motor-tyres across the stage in *Miracle in the Gorbals*. But he seems to have approached the part with intelligence, and not to have attempted a carbon-copy of Stanley Holden's interpretation. But his rather gauche and awkward approach never really moves — except in the fact that his shaggy haircut caused me a certain amount of grief. This Jasper has neglected himself terribly ! **E. C. M.**

Odette with technique

UNTIL the spate of new works promised for the spring, the most interesting spectacle that the Royal Ballet has had to offer during the winter months has been the appearance of various artists, tried and less tried, in the full-length classics. On November 28, Nadia Nerina and David Blair appeared in *Le Lac des Cygnes* instead of the scheduled Svetlana Beriosova and Donald MacLeary who had been loaned to the itinerant company, then in Oxford, to dance in *Coppélia*.

I have not seen Nerina in *Lac* since the time that she blossomed out so miraculously when dancing with Fadeyechev in a TV production of *Giselle*, so I was expecting new wonders in her Odette/Odile. Up to a point my hopes were realised but there is still that gap that lies between enjoyment and ecstasy on the part of the spectator that Nerina still fails to fill. One can be thrilled by her technique, and the Royal Ballet probably never had such a fine technician, but it is a dispassionate thrill because her interpretation fails to project. I get the impression of someone who has worked stupendously hard, of someone who has deeply considered, even to the last flicker, all the externals of the rôle but who has missed out on the rôle's true heartbeat. I would say that she has thought too much of Nerina as Odette rather than Odette. She has added a number of high lifts, particularly two gorgeous ones in the final act, and has made some great improvements in her variation in the third act. If her musical phrasing is a bit shaky it matters less than it would with most ballerinas owing to the perfection of her dancing. But it has now got to the point when, if her interpretation is not going to project more than at present, I feel she should do more. With her, and I would say this about no ballerina other than Alicia Alonso, I would like the *arabesque* to be even higher, slow *pirouettes à la seconde* or *en attitude* to be even slower, *fouettés* to be faster — in fact everything done with the bravura of the true virtuoso that she is. These are dangerous words but so much do I want to be knocked for six by Nerina that a little sacrifice of the Royal Ballet's carbon-copy performances on her part would be worth every flutter in the dovecote that might possibly ensue.

David Blair's Prince Siegfried has now crystallised into a performance which bears the clear imprint of his trademark. He has now realised that the poet prince is not for him and has developed into the real extrovert, and I like it enormously. He gives such an honest and direct interpretation. His step is sure and his reactions to his surrounding creatures — whether peasants, courtiers or swans — are natural and uncluttered with any kind of fuss. Yet don't run away with the idea that he lacks nobility ; far from it, and he has the kind of nobility that can unbend from time to time without any loss of face. I particularly liked a moment in the second act when he enters to stop the huntsmen from shooting the swans — Blair walks on deep in thought, suddenly he sees what is happening and rushes forward to halt the mass slaughter. This is much better than the usual hectic scamper in from the wings.

All through he partnered manfully and his dancing of the third-act variation was as exciting as a well-disciplined firework. If he could be compared to anyone it is to Dolin in his heyday ; he is not so Romantic as Somes nor as MacLeary is likely to become, but in his way he is just as right and there is room for all these different interpretations.

The *Pas de Trois* in the first act was given by Antoinette Sibley, Doreen Wells and Graham Usher. Sibley's variation was cleanly danced but her affectations are getting more pronounced nor could her interpretation be compared in any way to the splendid performance of Elizabeth Anderton given during the joint season a month or two back. Far more in the spirit of this classical *pas de trois*, which has *demi-caractére* overtones, was Doreen Wells, while Usher showed that he has a classical purity that is rapidly getting into the Brian Shaw class.

Ray Powell as the tutor Wolfgang has a new bit of business when he discovers a fly in his wine goblet. It is extremely amusing but I wonder more and more if the Royal Ballet's idea of making this a comic rôle is really right ; I can hardly imagine that any court would allow the heir-presumptive's education to be left in the hands of such a frivilous old man.

Quite different to the stately dignity of Pamela May is Gerd Larsen as the Princess Mother — less imperious but no less right, and her mime, in keeping with her Scandinavian origin, is as clear as the spoken word. I wish I could say the same for the clarity of the orchestra playing. At moments, particularly in the dance for the leading swans and in the tarantella, the melodic line of Tchaikovsky became so obscured as to be unrecognisable — the dancers looked supremely uncomfortable too. Emanuel Young dragged the score out into a funeral dirge of soporific dimensions. The dancers can hardly be blamed for lack-lustre performances when they have to cope with this kind of thing on one evening after a previous evening possibly conducted with the spirit of a John Lanchbery. **P. W.**

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FRANCE

THE PARIS OPERA

THE ballet this month has been rather eclipsed by Raymond Rouleau's brilliant production of *Carmen,* which was revived on November 10 with magnificent décors and costumes by Lila de Nobili. However, a variety of strictly choreographic projects have been planned. Thus M. Julien announced for December 16 the creation of *Conte cruel* by George Skibine, music Georges Delerue, with Marjorie Tallchief and Skibine himself ; and also the inclusion in the repertoire of Lander's *Qarrtsiluni.* On the same night Anton Dolin will reproduce his *The Pas de Quatre* with Lycette Darsonval (Taglioni), Yvette Chauviré (Grisi), Josette Amiel (Cerrito) and Marjorie Tallchief (Grahn). Chauviré will also be seen again in *Les Sylphides,* partnered by Peter Van Dijk.

In January, Tatiana Gzovsky will produce *La Dame aux Camélias* (music Sauguet), danced by Chauviré, for whom the work was originally created in Berlin ; followed by *Printempts* (Binet and Jouglet) with choreography by Skibine. In March, Vladimir Bourmeister, who is *maître de ballet* of the Stanislavsky-Dantchenko company, will produce *Swan Lake,* and this will be followed by Gene Kelly's *Concerto in F* (Gershwin).

On November 12, a bust of Jacques Rouché was unveiled in the foyer of the Opéra. In the presence of numerous artists of song and dance, the vice-president of the Carpeaux Circle and M. Julien paid homage to the memory of this man who, as the Administrator declared, lit in this house a flame that will burn for ever. Let us accept this prediction.

KATHERINE DUNHAM

IT is 10 years since Katherine Dunham triumphed in Paris under the sign of Voodoo ritual. Now the sudden failure of the Jeanmaire musical, *Patron,* at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt brought her back to us at this theatre on November 6.

However she hadn't enough time to polish up her programme, and once her novelty value has gone, she stands or falls by her personal charm, by the quality of her troupe and by inimitable production of her spectacle. This time we did not see her so much as the academic ethnic dance arranger she would probably like to appear, but as a woman of the theatre, with a strong stage sense and a dominating presence. And, to a serious student of dance, the public anyway would seem to prefer the Dunham who is carried on a shield in *Afrique* or who sings so seductively in *Batacuda.*

With their intense rhythmic sense, the dancers convey the frenzy of *Shango,* the sacrifice of the white cock. *L'Agya* retains its magical charm, with its lair of the King of the Zombies in the heart of the equatorial forest, which gets its effect from an atmosphere of strangeness and mystery.

Besides the animator — never was a title so apt — there is the agreeable authority of Vanoye Aitkens, and Ricardo Avalos as the traitor. There is also a variety of Latin American *Motivos* of unequal merit, but outstanding among these were *Choros 1 and 4,* the exquisite Brazilian quadrilles of the 19th century, whose rather mannered and creole grace was perfectly interpreted, particularly by Lenwood Morris, who is the troupe's ballet master. Perhaps it is to him that the dancers owe their superb ease and suppleness. Jean Bartet's elaborate headdresses add to this varied and colourful programme the aura of chic desired by Katherine Dunham.

MARIEMMA

LUISILLO was succeeded by Mariemma at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées on November 2. This dancer gives little thought to dramatisation, but concentrates on the elaboration of gesture. Thus she gives individually stylised renderings of dances, which other companies, showing perhaps more ardour but certainly less subtlety, are content to interpret in the classical manner. Mariemma has consequently evoked harmonious *malaguenas, seguidillas* and *jotas,* sometimes also adding *flamenco, Castilian* and *Basque* inspiration.

It is a pleasure to see Antonio Gades, one of Pilar Lopez's most brilliant pupils, partnering her. From Lopez, this handsome dancer has obviously inherited the elegance and restraint with which he triumphs in the Miller's Dance from *Tricorne,* and the *Danse de Chivato,* whose warmth is in contrast to the classical *boleros* and the *Panaderos* which he dances with Mariemma.

Though he does not possess the mastery of his more illustrious predecessors, the Basque dancer, Juan Astirraga, shows definite talent, which would, however, gain from being disciplined and enriched by schooling.

THE NATIONAL BALLET OF HUNGARY

THIS company made its third Paris appearance at the Alhambra on November 5, and its successful reception remained almost unchanged. The spectator, swayed by the characteristic rhythms and melodies — *czardas* and rhapsodies — is bewitched by the dancers' detailed and agile footwork, the whirling colourful skirts, red boots and swinging plaits. The famous *Dance with Bottles* and the charming *Wedding at Eczer* were appreciated once more. Greatly admired also was the intensely virile *Dance of the Hussars,* arranged by Miklos Rabai to music by Kodaly. This refreshing and joyful evening's amusement is strongly recommended.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UNDER the auspices of the Jeunesses Musicales de France, Michel Renault danced at the Salle Plevel on November 5 with a series of ballerinas — Chauviré. Darsonval, Daydé and Bessy. On December 3 he was followed by Peter Van Dijk.

THE BALLETS MODERNE DE PARIS opened at the new Théâtre de Chambéry on October 31, and later appeared at the Théâtre de la Cité at Villeurbane (near Lyon), where they created *Dans la rue* by Francoise and Dominique and Jérôme Andrews.

ON November 19 and 26, Bella Reine staged at the Petit Théâtre de Paris her programme, *Smiles and Tears* — a suite of tableaux inspired by Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas, Picasso, Daumier and Chagall to music by Bach, Milhaud, Sauguet, Prokofiev and others.

Orphee

Opera-ballet by Gluck. Produced by Michel Crochot. Choreography by Peter Van Dijk. Décors and costumes by Jean-Denis Malclès. Reproduced at the Opéra-Comique on November 4, 1959.

PETER VAN DIJK — CLAUDE BESSY
NINON LEBERTRE — RAOUL BARI

GLUCK'S *Orfeo ed Euridice,* created at the Burgtheater of Vienna on October 5, 1762, poses a delicate problem of style. Despite all attempts at innovation the work remains a product of its century, not only in its happy ending but in its rapid tempo and very marked dance interludes. It has, therefore, seemed a mistake to allow first a romantic and then a neo-antique à la Duncan influence to appear as until now has been the case. And was it not a great temptation for this American dancer to cut out all those parts of the ballets of which she considered the music unsuited to her plastique style ?

Following its revival at Aix-en-Provence in 1955, the Opéra-Comique has since felt obliged to try to recapture the original mood. The musical direction of Louis de Froment, the ingenious décors, stage machinery and costumes by Jean-Denis Malclès, and the production of Michel Crochot here pay homage to its spirit. In such an atmosphere of refined elegance and serene classicism, Peter Van Dijk has arranged the dance interventions with flexible and discreet mastery, despite the fact that the shallowness of the stage impeded the movement of the dancers. While in the underworld scene masked dancers are shown whirling about in the arms of leaping black demons, that of the Elysian Fields expresses perfectly the bliss and idyllic poetry of the score. The point and half-point are skilfully employed. With his understated virtuosity which gives an appearance of ease to his incomparable *batterie,* Van Dijk brought to his performance a distinctive grace and nobility.

With him, Claude Bessy showed herself less in harmony with the work's mood, which happens to be ill-suited to her too down to earth charms. Ninon Lebertre and Raoul Bari led the other dancers, whose female elements has a long way to go before fulfilling the demands of the choreography. The qualities of the latter — notably musicality and purity — can only augur well for Van Dijk's next ballet. **Marie-Françoise Christout**

AMERICA

THE first visit of the Polish State Folk Ballet (Slask), the return of the Inbal Dance Theatre from Israel, Alexandra Danilova's choreography for the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *The Gypsy Baron* and the Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly television programmes have been the dance highlights in New York that have preceded the seven-week mid-winter season of the New York City Ballet. In addition, dance has made news in new musicals both on and off Broadway as well as between the covers of more than half a dozen new books.

POLISH STATE FOLK BALLET

THE Polish State Folk Ballet Company, Hurok's new importation, proved to be a completely winning and delightful group of more than one hundred dancers, singers and musicians. Welcomed by a gala first night audience headed by Alicia Markova, Agnes de Mille and a host of other notables, these dancers presented a broad array of the dance styles for which their nation is noted. Especially interesting were the opening *Polonaise* and *Mazurka,* both Polish national dances, since they showed us so

vividly the basic elegance and dignity of these patterns. Watching them one senses immediately how this rich folk heritage has inevitably found its way into classical ballet from the 19th century to the present day.

As in most truly authentic folk dances, the men have by far the most important rôle and the males in this company danced with vigour, strength and style. In this instance, however, the girls were not far behind them and even go so far as to support the men in a series of lifted leaps. Obviously, however, these dances do not call for the virtuosity that we have noted in the various Russian folk troupes. Nevertheless, choreographer Elwira Kaminska has treated this folk material honestly and has formalised it for stage purposes without making it overly theatrical. Similarly, Stanislaw Hadyna, director and conductor for the company, has kept the choice of music and its orchestration within the framework of the subject matter. Noteworthy, too, were dances of the Kujawy and Krakow regions, as well as *Trojak,* a stunning walking dance that was performed by the entire company. Needless to say, the costumes were opulent and eye-filling.

INBAL DANCE THEATRE

THE eighth event of the Hurok International Festival was the return of Inbal Dance Theatre of Israel, which was presented by Sol Hurok at the New York City Center under the auspices of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. It may be added at once that the company has grown enormously since their first visit here two years ago. All of us who liked them tremendously then have found much more to admire this time. In the first place, as performing artists these dancers have deepened and matured in a very exciting manner. Moreover, they are considerably more engrossing from a technical point of view. By this, I do not mean to infer that we did not appreciate them in the first place — we did. Now, however, under the continuing guidance of their artistic director, Sara Levi-Tanai, who is also choreographer and producer, they are one of the most remarkable folk companies to visit the United States.

What struck me at once is how Inbal is heading in the direction of total lyric theatre — that is, a blending of dance, movement, mime, the spoken word and song. This is most evident in new works such as *Desert* and *On Eagles' Wings,* where this combination of theatrical elements reminded me most strongly of the great drama of the Greek National Theatre, its use of the classic chorus that speaks, chants, moves and dances. Another element that is characteristic of Inbal is its heritage, which seems to have been coloured by the dance forms of Africa, the Orient as well as from the Moslem Arabic Peninsula and Israel. Thus, we see evidences of the Indian mudras and the elegances of Oriental gesture while, at the same time, we note the percussive and total use of the middle body (torso) that is a characteristic of African primitive dance. On the surface, some of this bears a striking resemblance to some forms of the so-called American modern dance yet it is essentially quite different.

"Inbal" is an Hebraic word for clapper of the bell, and it is indeed this that makes music in the silent shell. Quite obviously, the dancers in this company are completely dedicated and are fully aware of their rich and ancient heritage. As a result, what they perform and the way they perform it is somewhat like a rite that is filled with ecstasy. *Desert,* the major new work, is a sequence of ten dances that suggests the timelessness of the caravan moving in its eternal trail. "Along the desert, (it) symbolises the way of life of the man-animal" and tells how he "grows the flower of primal love", "exists the dangers of hate and jealousy," "dreams about water-dreams about love" and how "the old song continues with the question : where to?"

The other major new work, *On Eagles' Wings,* was composed for the occasion of the tenth anniversary to celebrate the end of the Yemenite Jewish exile — from the suffering of exile and the longing for redemption — to the partaking of this community in the upbuilding of the new Israel. Other highlights were *The Queen of Sheba* and *Song of Deborah,* both of which were so successful on the company's previous tour.

ROYES FERNANDEZ, who is dancing this season with New York City Ballet as one of its principal male dancers. *Photo : Paul Himmel.*

HUROK AWARDED

IN a recent ceremony impresario Sol Hurok was awarded the Gold Medal of the Sam S. Shubert Foundation for his "outstanding individual contribution to the New York legitimate theatre". John Shubert, who presented the award to Hurok, cited him for lending the season "an international flavour comparable to a one-man United Nations of attractions". Quite obviously this is a most justified reward and one remark overheard at the première of the Inbal Dance Theatre of Israel proved it when one first-nighter turned to the other and said, "If we New Yorkers just sit here and wait long enough, Sol Hurok will bring every wonderful dancer and company right here".

DANILOVA AT THE MET.

THE highspot of the Metropolitan Opera House's new production of *The Gypsy Baron* was, to judge by the audience's resounding ovation, Alexandra Danilova's "Court Ballet" set to the "Emperor Waltz". Set in Rolf Gerard's magnificent setting for an imperial throne room in Vienna (one of the most glorious new settings unveiled at the Met. in years and one that would lend itself magnificently to a one-act ballet all its own at a later date), Danilova's court ballet opens the third act with style, elegance and beauty. The important word here is *style,* for this is just what the choreographer has so richly provided. What she has devised is so essentially right and honest as a court ballet, and the behaviour and etiquette of her dancers is true to the period. This première was also notable since it marked the Metropolitan Opera début of Violette Verdy, who appeared through the courtesy of the New York City Ballet. Verdy, who is truly a formidable dancer, performed with her usual technical brilliance, but I (and I'm in a minority) felt that she tried a mite too hard and was not as lyric and floating in her movements as this work seemed to demand. Scott Douglas made a very fine partner indeed and came very close to dancing off with the honours of the evening. The ballet costumes, designed by Rolf Gerard and executed by Karinska, were in pale pink and white and were indeed quite ravishing.

For no apparent reason, the management of the Metropolitan Opera chose Dania Krupska, a former assistant to Agnes de Mille, to choreograph the gypsy dances in the first two acts, and these were quite undistinguished. In addition to lacking focus and style, Miss Krupska seemed unaware of the fact that gypsies dance all of the time, that they have specific movement qualities and, most of all, that they have fire. Since Danilova choreographs especially well for men, it would have indeed been interesting to see what she might have done with this assignment.

N.Y. CITY BALLET

STARTING December 8, the New York City Ballet began a nine-week season (its twenty-fifth) that was highlighted by the

return of prima ballerina Maria Tallchief, the début of Royes Fernandez and guest appearances by Erik Bruhn, on loan from the Royal Danish Ballet, and the return of Martha Graham in *Episodes* with members of her company. One of the major events of this season will be a Pan-American programme consisting of the music of nine contemporary Latin-American composers and choreographed by six Americans. The composers represented include Carlos Chavez (Mexico); Luis Escobar (Colombia); Alberto Ginastera (Argentina); Julian Orbon (Cuba); Juan Orrego Salas (Chile); Silvestre Revueltas (Mexico); Andres Sas (Peru); Hector Tosar (Uruguay) and the late Heitor Villa-Lobos (Brazil). Ballets set to these scores will be choreographed by George Balanchine, Artistic Director of the New York City Ballet, Francisco Moncion, Todd Bolender, Lew Christensen, John Taras, Gloria Contreras and Jacques d'Amboise.

In addition, there will be revivals of two Balanchine ballets, *The Night Shadow* and *Theme and Variations*, neither of which have been performed by this company before. Erik Bruhn and Violette Verdy will appear in *The Night Shadow*, as will Nicholas Magallanes and Allegra Kent. Erik Bruhn is also slated to appear in *Swan Lake* with Maria Tallchief, and in *Pas de Dix* as well, quite probably, as *Orpheus*. Also awaited is the first appearance of Edward Villella in *The Prodigal Son*.

BALANCHINE'S GIFTS

GEORGE BALANCHINE, artistic director of the New York City Ballet, has made a gift of a number of his ballets through the Bureau of International Cultural Relations of the State Department to State-supported national ballet companies in Europe. These include La Scala in Milan, Royal Dutch Ballet and the Royal Swedish Ballet. (Previously, Balanchine has donated his *Serenade, Symphony in C* and *Apollo* to the Royal Danish Ballet and his *Gounod Symphony* as well as *Symphony in C* and *Serenade* to the Paris Opéra Ballet.)

Vida Brown, assistant to George Balanchine, has been in Milan mounting *Serenade* and *Symphony in C*, and it is planned that Balanchine will supervise these personally before they are premièred. Meanwhile, the Royal Dutch Ballet will be given *Four Temperaments* and *Serenade* while the Royal Swedish Ballet will receive *Symphony in C* and *Serenade*.

AN EVENING WITH ASTAIRE

In his second hour-long television programme Fred Astaire presented the best dance programme presented on this medium thus far this season. Partnered again by the pert and lovely Barrie Chase, Fred Astaire, with the aid of choreographer Hermes Pan, devised two especially good numbers. One was *The Afterbeat*, with its tricky new rhythm and lyrics, that they danced delightfully, starting with what was apparently a spontaneous improvisation. Another, *That Face*, featured Barrie Chase first in a photo-montage effect that developed into a Vernon and Irene-Castle type of dance. Fred Astaire also performed a vivacious dance to Jonah Jones' drum solo in which he imitated a baseball player and a Spanish bull fighter. While *Night Train* and *Sophisticated Lady* both had too many dancers and were full of movement clichés, Astaire redeemed himself by singing snatches from eleven of the songs that he has made famous. All of the programme, however, represented the taste and impeccable style of Fred Astaire. At sixty, his rhythmic sense and phrasing are as apparently effortless as ever and in Barrie Chase he has discovered one of his most delightful partners since his own sister, Adele.

GRAHAM RETURNS TO N.Y.C.B.: Martha Graham and Bertram Ross in a scene from the highly successful experiment, Episodes, *in which Martha Graham and Balanchine combine. The return of this work is one of the most notable events of the present New York City Ballet season at City Center.* *Photo: Martha Swope.*

AN EVENING WITH KELLY

GENE KELLY'S hour-long television programme also started out with a delightful number, *Shall We Dance*, from *The King And I*, performed charmingly by Kelly and the lovely Carol Lawrence, who first came to fame in the leading rôle in the New York company of *West Side Story*. Again, when he was partnered by Donald O'Connor, in *Making Whoopee*, the programme retained its freshness and invention. After this, however, there was an over-long and rather tedious vaudeville act for the three stars and things got no better with a pretentious Spanish dance in which Gene Kelly seemed totally uncomfortable. A final duo, which found Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor sitting down on kitchen chairs and tap dancing, was charming. One must conclude, however, that the best dancing on the programme was by Donald O'Connor, especially in his solo scene in a deserted night club.

AWARD TO ALICIA MARKOVA

BEFORE returning to London for a television appearance on the BBC, Alicia Markova was guest of honour at the Britannia Ball in the Hotel Plaza. This event, honouring the cultures of the British Commonwealth of Nations, was for the benefit of the International Cultural Center for Youth in Jerusalem. The scroll presented to Alicia Markova read as follows: "The art of dancing transcends the power of tongue and speaks to all peoples in the universal language of movement. As one of the great ballerinas of our time, you have dedicated your life to bringing both the beauty and eloquence of dance to audiences throughout the world. On behalf of the International Cultural Center for Youth in Jerusalem, dedicated to youth, and the creative arts of all peoples, we are honoured to honour you."

HONOUR FOR RUTH ST. DENIS

RUTH ST. DENIS, who is often lovingly called the Mother of American Dance, and who, at 80, is still dancing, has been named as "Artist in Residence" at Adelphi College by Dr. Paul Dawson Eddy, President of this institution at Garden City, Long Island. Both Dr. Eddy and Adelphi College have long been interested in dance, have supported it, had it in the curriculum. Now they plan to have Miss St. Denis in residence on the campus for a period of three months beginning in February. Ruth St. Denis will work with the Dance Department, will lecture, consult with students in the dance division and may also give some dance demonstrations during this period.

ASTAIRE REHEARSES: Fred Astaire, kneeling, rehearses some of the dancers for his second highly successful TV show — An Evening with Fred Astaire.

MARTHA GRAHAM'S FILM

AFTER completing her guest performances in *Episodes* with the New York City Ballet, Martha Graham and her company start intensive rehearsals for the filming of *Night Journey*, which is scheduled to start on the 20th of this month. In addition, the Graham company is rehearsing two new works for inclusion in their projected Spring season.

Coincident with Martha Graham's performances with the New York City Ballet, Austin Productions has just released reproductions of Joseph Konzal's sculpture of Graham as he recalls her in *Primitive Mysteries* and *Le Sacre du Printempts*. This dancer did not sit for this head, nor does she have any connection with the distribution of this facsimile sculpture. Joseph Konzal has chosen Martha Graham as "one of the five Americans (the other four are Abraham Lincoln, Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg and Frank Lloyd Wright) whose contribution towards founding, extending and illuminating an indigenous American expression has been prodigious".

"LITTLE MARY SUNSHINE"

ONE of the delights of the current season has been the off-Broadway presentation of *Little Mary Sunshine*, a new musical about an old operetta with book, music and lyrics by Rick Besoyan and staged and choreographed by Ray Harrison. Since Rick Besoyan served his apprenticeship with the Savoy Light Opera Company, there are some echoes of Gilbert and Sullivan in his satire, though there is much more that is reminiscent of the Jerome Kern, Sigmund Romberg, Rudolf Friml operettas of three decades ago, specifically of *Rose Marie*. Choreographer Ray Harrison, who appeared on Broadway in *On The Town, One Touch of Venus, Make Mine Manhattan* and *Out of This World*, has devised superlatively amusing dances and has provided a like function for his direction of the songs and musical numbers. Especially hilarious are the staging of "Look for a Sky of Blue" and "Colorado Love Call" as well as "A Shell Game", a dance for three Indians. In view of the generally low level of the dancing and choreography for the big, new Broadway hits, particularly the enormously dated and disappointing Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *A Sound of Music*, which is a triumph of the maudlin and mawkish, Rick

PARTNERS VARIOUS: Partners have always played an important part in Astaire's long career and here are two quite different ones with whom he appeared in his TV show. Left, he rehearses with Barrie Chase, who is reported as being one of his best partners since his sister Adele. Right, Astaire dances to the percussion accompaniment of Jonah Jones.

AWARDS AND HONOURS: Left, John Shubert presents the Shubert Foundation Award to Sol Hurok for his contributions as an impresario to the past New York season. Centre, Alicia Markova receives a scroll award from Mrs. Spyros Skouras at the Britannia Ball. Sir Douglas Fairbanks is seen in the background. Right, Ruth St. Denis is seen with Dr. Paul Dawson Eddy, president of Adelphi College where Miss St. Denis has been made an "Artist-in-Residence".

Besoyan and Ray Harrison couldn't have produced their antidote at a more timely moment.

NEW DANCE PUBLICATIONS

A SPATE of new dance books were published in America just before Christmas, timed, one might suppose, for gift-giving. Among them were two paperback books of considerable merit — Walter Terry's *Ballet*, and *The Bolshoi Ballet Story* by Y. Bocharnikova, M. Gabovich, Galina Ulanova and Yuri Slonimsky. In addition, there has been Olga Maynard's *The American Ballet* and Katherine Dunham's semi-autobiographical *A Touch of Innocence*. Other already known British books that have recently appeared in American editions are John Hart's *The Royal Ballet in Performance, Dictionary of Modern Ballet, The Ballet Annual—1960*, and Serge Lido's *Ballet*.

DANCE FILM PROGRAMME

DURING three evenings in December the Lena Robbins Foundation and Dance Films Inc. presented a showing of dance films at the film library of the Donnell Library Center, a branch of the New York Public Library. Included in these showings were Martha Graham's *A Dancer's World*, Jerome Robbins' *Fancy Free*, excerpts from *The Dumb Girl of Portici*, starring Anna Pavlova, and *A Night at the Peking Opera*.

ROBBINS' DANCERS ON TV

ON November 29, Jerome Robbins' "Ballets : U.S.A." company appeared in three excerpts from *New York Export : Opus Jazz* for a fifteen-minute period on the Ed Sullivan nation-wide television programme. It was exciting to see this wonderful group dancing again so admirably and their stirring performance was marred only by continually changing camera views that broke the thread of the action. Apparently the television technicians in the United States still can't let well enough alone and simply photograph a ballet as it was designed to be seen from straight on.

IN BRIEF

RALPH BEAUMONT was responsible for the choreography for *Saratoga*, the musicalisation of Edna Ferber's *Saratoga Trunk*, which opened last month at the Winter Garden Theatre.

ONNA WHITE has used the trite formula of a dream ballet (this time a black and white Aubrey Beardsley one) in *Take Me Along*, the musicalisation of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness*.

PETER GENNARO was responsible for the dances for *Fiorello*, Broadway's first hit musical thus far this season.

MATT MATTOX is responsible for the choreography for and appears as Ginger Rogers' dancing partner in *The Pink Jungle*, the musical play that returns Fred Astaire's former dancing partner to Broadway this month.

Arthur Todd.

CHOREOGRAPHY BY DANILOVA : The Court scene from The Gypsy Baron *at the Met. for which Alexandra Danilova did the choreography. Violette Verdy is seen in the foreground. Photo : Louis Mélançon.*

Cyrano de Bergerac

DECOR

continued from page 15

Somehow I felt that the old swashbuckling poetic drama would be drowned in cascades of rich materials and *haut couture*.

My sinking heart, however, had overlooked two things — Petit's innate sense of theatrical fitness and France's deep respect for her literary works. In fact the marriage of Basarte's settings with Yves Saint Laurent's costumes has turned out to be a particularly happy one.

Whether it was Petit's present inclination towards total theatre rather than ballet that dictated his choice of Basarte, I would not know. But the result is settings far nearer to the Berliner Ensemble or those once used by the Pitoëffs than anything yet seen in ballet — simple practical pieces of scenery, rostrums, raked floor-pieces all against black curtains. What is more, the lighting, which is usually so slovenly in French touring ballet companies, was sensitive and apt. There is very little colour in these settings, mostly browns and greys with occasional touches of red as in the theatre curtain for the first scene and some banners in the camp before Arras.

In much the same way as did Bérard create a whole world of atmosphere around his little red-curtained theatre in *Les Forains*, so has Basarte managed to create a different sort of world around each of his eight scenes. Never is the audience conscious of any kind of scenic economy but rather of a degree of realism that painted backcloths and wings seldom can give.

It is true that the settings were possibly more functional than decorative, but in their self-effacement they gave the whole stage picture the quality of a Callot painting or engraving. As far as stage pictures are concerned the most memorable was when the balcony scene moved away to make room for a procession on the way to Arras; the black curtains at the back parted and the procession appeared to disappear into the distance. The final scene, in the Convent — with its central tree and its autumnal foliage suggested by draped borders, with the Convent itself suggested by a few Gothic arches, seen dimly in the background — was a fine example of simple impressionistic designing.

It would have been easy, and almost excusable, if against such simplicity Yves Saint Laurent succumbed to the temptation of designing elaborate and colourful costumes. The fact that they are muted, with one very unfortunate exception, says much for his taste and sense of occasion. In fact I was surprised that in the one scene when he could have let himself go, the opening scene in the theatre, he did not make his Marquises and Courtesans more elaborate. True, the courtesans, with their black and coloured striped dresses and their high, almost Welsh, hats, looked slightly bizarre — even so they were subdued and never obtruded from the patina which appeared to cover the whole scene. The Marquises were in unobtrusive pastel colours.

If the *divertissement* in Ragueneau's kitchen, for different kinds of bread, birds and sweets, never quite fell into the pattern of the whole then it was hardly Saint Laurent's fault because neither did the music nor the choreography. The costumes had a certain wit and I like some tutus which had been tucked under to give the rounded appearance of brioches. The costumes for the Musketeers were very plausible with their jerkins of different browns and their puffed white sleeves covered with ribbons. The peasants all wore just the kind of garments you would expect peasants to wear.

When everything was so much in keeping with the period and the particular aura of Rostand's Romantic idea, I was surprised that Roxane's costumes should have gone so far astray. Her entrances are good — she comes on in some beautiful and dramatic cloaks, one in a pink peach colour was particularly arresting, but when the overgarment is removed she is left with a series of little numbers which give no sense of period or of any kind of style. Really they look like a series of short ball dresses such as you might see in the windows of some of the cheaper shops in Oxford Street. Their length is wrong, their silhouette is wrong and their material is wrong. Her first costume in black with some gold glitter around the shoulders was particularly unfortunate, and so also were later ones in baby blue and in pink, though admittedly the latter was presumably intended to be some kind of a nightdress. In the second act she appears in boots and looks like Robin Hood in a *Babes in the Wood* pantomime; then when she is supposed to have entered a Convent she appears in a very flimsy and rather sexy black creation.

I am at a loss to understand why someone who has designed everything else so well, should have slipped up so badly in his dressing of one of the most important characters in the ballet. It is still possible to create dresses that can be danced in yet retain the silhouette of the period, by using materials that move in the manner of that period. Materials and their movement play a vital part in creating a feeling of any particular period. It was only on this count that Saint Laurent showed himself up as a couturier rather than as a designer for the theatre. In every other respect he proved himself to have far more understanding of ballet's requirements than did his one-time master, Christian Dior, whose series of costumes for *Treizes Danses* (for Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées) looked more like a parade of models from his own salon.

By his choice of these two designers and by his use of them, Petit shows a far more serious approach to ballet decoration. Nothing can ever obscure the wonderful panorama of design he has paraded before us in the past, but I welcome this move away from the frivolity towards a theatre that should eventually command deeper respect from everyone. **Peter Williams.**

COVER STORIES

This month's front cover, by Dominic, is of Nadia Nerina and David Blair in the second act of the Royal Ballet's Le Lac des Cygnes. **Both artists create leading rôles in Ashton's forthcoming** La Fille Mal Gardée.

NADIA NERINA was born in Cape Town in 1927. Her first studies were with Hazel Grinter and Joyce Smerdon, later with Mary Skeaping. She won a number of awards and later toured South Africa before coming to England in 1945 first to the Rambert School and later to the then Sadler's Wells School. In the following year she went into the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet. In 1946 she was promoted to the company at Covent Garden as a soloist. In 1952 she was made a ballerina of the now Royal Ballet.

Nerina has created a number of rôles, but most important to date will be in Frederick Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée*. She has also danced all the leading rôles in all the full-length classics in the Royal Ballet's repertory. She is generally considered to be one of the finest technicians of our time.

DAVID BLAIR was born in Halifax, England, in 1932. At an early age he won an R.A.D. scholarship and entered the Sadler's Wells School in 1946, moving to the Theatre Ballet in the following year. Almost immediately he started to take over principal rôles as well as creating a number of important new ones, particularly in Cranko's *Pineapple Poll* and *Harlequin in April*. In 1953 he became a soloist at Covent Garden and has moved on since to become one of the Royal Ballet's principal male dancers. As well as creating a number of parts he has also played the principal male rôles in all the full-length classics.

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET
at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

December
18 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
19 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Nerina, Blair)
21 *Les Patineurs, Rinaldo and Armida, The Firebird*
23 *Cinderella* (Fonteyn, Somes)
26 **(M)** *Cinderella* (Beriosova, MacLeary)
26 **(E)** *Cinderella* (Nerina, Blair)
28 *Cinderella* (Nerina, Blair)
30 *Cinderella* (Beriosova, MacLeary)
31 *Cinderella* (Linden, Doyle)

January
2 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Linden, Blair)
5 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
6 *The Prince of the Pagodas* (Beriosova, Blair)
9 **(M)** *Cinderella* (Linden, Doyle)
9 **(E)** *Cinderella* (Nerina, Blair)
12 *Cinderella* (Fonteyn, Somes)
14 *The Prince of the Pagodas* (Beriosova, Blair)
16 *Cinderella* (Nerina, Blair)
18 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
20 *Coppélia* (Park, Burne), *Façade* (Helpmann)
23 **(M)** *The Prince of the Pagodas* (Linden, Hynd)
23 **(E)** *Cinderella* (Fonteyn, Somes)
26 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
28 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (world première)
30 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)

February
1 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
3 *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
6 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Page, Hynd)
6 **(E)** *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
9 *Pineapple Poll, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
11 *Pineapple Poll, Les Rendezvous, Petrushka*
13 *Les Sylphides, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
15 *Les Rendezvous, La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair)
17 *La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair), *Façade* (Helpmann)
20 **(M)** *Coppélia* (Linden, Blair), *Façade*

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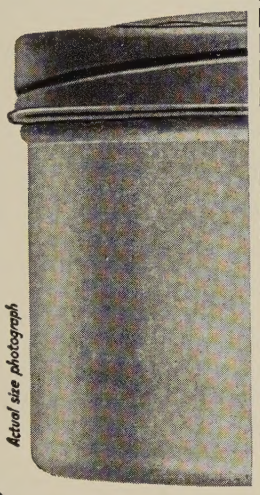

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